ISSUE #001
November 2024

RED AMERICA

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

RED AMERICA

Issue #001
November 2024

Publisher: American Communist Party
Website: acp.us
Email: main@acp.us

ISBN: 978-1-300-89838-2

Copyright © 2024

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission of the publisher. The views or positions presented in articles featured in Red America do not necessarily represent the official policy or position of the American Communist Party, nor should the publication of any article be taken to mean endorsement of its content.

Issue number: #001
First published: November 2024

Contents

v Message from the Chairman
Haz Al-Din

1 The Marxist Sublation of Hegel
Carlos L. Garrido

35 Imperialism, Multipolarity, and the International Communist Movement
Christopher Helali

43 Snakes in the Grass: The Fake Left, the 2024 Elections and Identity Politics
Danny Shaw

75 Hindsight Anti-Imperialism: The Compatible Critics of US Foreign Policy
Eddie Liger Smith

91 Marxism and Tradition
Grayson S. Walker

97 The American Oligarchy
Paul Cockshott

105 In Defense of 1776: Towards a Concrete Position on the American Class Struggle
Noah Khrachvik

125 The Ringing Call of The Gallic Cock: On Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right
Thomas Riggins

133 The Theoretical Framework of Digital Socialism Abroad: Foundational Logic
Zhang Zhongyuan & Xiao Guangpan

Message from the Chairman

Haz Al-Din[1]

Comrades, I would like to extend you all sincere congratulations on having achieved genuine success for our Party in the first three months of its declaration, far surpassing the initial expectations of the Plenary Committee that originally gathered together in Chicago to officially reconstitute the Communist Party of this country.

In the three months since the declaration of our Party, dozens of chapters across the United States and Canada have since formed. They have performed monumental feats of community service, from clearing public spaces of hazardous materials, building relationships with local labor organizations, to providing relief to communities in need in the midst of environmental disasters. Such outstanding displays of initiative, determination, sacrifice, comradeship and solidarity have deeply impressed everyday Americans, and have begun the process of re-defining and changing the meaning of what Communism is within their consciousness.

---

1. Haz Al-Din is the Executive Chairman of the American Communist Party. He is a political theorist and thought-leader for the Infrared Media Collective.

The process of building local organization, autonomous decision-making, and giving expression to the collective will of individuals through chapters has thus far been an immense success. The petty rivalries and divisions of individual personalities and differences of opinion have thus far failed to surmount the collective discipline of Party association. And wherever these tendencies have shown themselves, comrades have responded almost instantaneously to re-assert the discipline of genuine collective association, in the proletarian spirit.

Comrades, it is necessary to take note of the fact that our greatest strength lies not in our numbers, which for now remain modest. They lie neither in our wealth and resources, which are likewise, for now, modest. Our strength lies in our collective discipline, in the precedent we have established which places the interest of the collective before the interests of the individual, which reigns in the impulses, passions, and emotions of the individual and properly situates them within the context of real, concrete association. The strength of our Party lies in its ability to temper the flimsiness, narrowness, pettiness, and egotism of the individual in the fires of collective struggle, producing unbreakable bonds of association made of steel.

The principal weakness of left organizations in Western countries has thus far been the predominance of petty bourgeois individualism, and the inability to subordinate the individual will to the will of the collective. Our Party has, in many respects, already achieved this tremendous feat, and in a country like America no less.

Simultaneously, it is necessary not to become complacent and comfortable in the conventions established collectively and institutionally. Such complacency has given rise, historically, to the tendencies of opportunism, liquidationism, and revisionism amidst new decisive circumstances that demand active initiative. Our Party was designed to balance the strength of collective organization typical of historical Communist parties with the experimental dynamism of the American spirit. Toward that end, chapters have already begun to take the initiative by taking risks, and pursuing ventures without precedent. It should always be remembered that creativity, novelty, and innovation are greatly appreciated and rewarded by the Executive Board. Without this, our Party risks becoming stagnant, lifeless, and eventually vulnerable to defeat.

Finally, our Party can now proudly declare itself as truly reconstituted in the fullest sense, after the ratification of our Party constitution during the First

National Convention of the American Communist Party held recently in Chicago. To the surprise and amazement of the Executive Board, the constitution was ratified according to unanimous decision. While this is a tremendous and exceptional display of unity for our Party, it is incumbent upon us to also cultivate a spirit of genuine criticism, self-criticism, dialogue and debate.

Comrades from throughout the country were able to come to know one and another during our first Convention, and a spirit of genuine comradeship, solidarity, and even friendship has been cultivated. But let us not forsake the need for criticism and debate in the name of maintaining friendships. Let us, in the spirit of genuine proletarian collectivism, regard questions of criticism and debate impersonally. Let no one feel offended or slighted by disagreement and detraction. Criticism and debate should occur on a comradely basis.

What unifies our Party is not an identical theoretical outlook on all matters pertaining to strategy and theory. What unifies our Party is the commitment to building one Communist Party, in the genuine spirit of democratic centralism, which guarantees freedom of criticism while demanding unity of action by and for all membership.

Toward that end, let us cultivate a genuine spirit of experimentation, inquiry, and ruthless criticism in our official Party journal. Let us, while acknowledging and paying proper tribute to the historical synthesis of Marxism-Leninism, commit to the unprecedented task of pursuing the synthesis of Marxism in America.

Let us make no mistake. Such a task is uncharted territory. There are no readily-made, dogmatic precepts to proscribe upon it. No one can claim that their position is beyond criticism or reproach. As the American Communist Party, we have yet to prove ourselves, and prove the successful application of Marxism in America.

As the Party continues to make practical strides toward success, let the journal serve as a genuine organ of real praxis. Let us not disregard the practical successes and achievements of our Party as we set ourselves to the task of rediscovering Marxism in a new historical and geographical context. Let us temper our speculative endeavors with what is concurrently being proven practically and concretely.

That, comrades, is how we will uphold the historical synthesis of Marxism-Leninism, the most advanced outlook acquired by mankind so far, which bases itself upon the unity of both theory and practice.

1

The Marxist Sublation of Hegel

Carlos L. Garrido[1]

While working on the seven notebooks we know today as the *Grundrisse*, Marx wrote to Engels in 1858 that he "very much [would] like to write 2 or 3 sheets making accessible to the common reader the rational aspect of the method which Hegel not only discovered but also mystified".[2] He makes a similar remark a decade later in a letter to Joseph Dietzgen, where he says that,

> *When I have cast off the burden of political economy, I shall write a 'Dialectic'. The true laws of dialectics are already contained in Hegel, though in a mystical form. What is needed is to strip away this form.*[3]

---

1. Carlos L. Garrido is a Cuban American philosophy professor. He is the Director of the Midwestern Marx Institute and the Secretary of Education of the American Communist Party. He has authored many books, including *The Purity Fetish and the Crisis of Western Marxism (2023)*, *Why We Need American Marxism (2024)*, *Marxism and the Dialectical Materialist Worldview (2022)*, and the forthcoming *On Losurdo's Western Marxism (2025)* and *Hegel, Marxism, and Dialectics (2025)*. He has written for dozens of scholarly and popular publications around the world and runs various live-broadcast shows for the Midwestern Marx Institute YouTube. Subscribe to his Substack: *Philosophy in Crisis*.

2. Karl Marx, "Marx to Engels," January 16, 1858. In *Marx-Engels Collected Works* Vol 40 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1983), 249.

3. Karl Marx, "Marx to Joseph Dietzgen," May 9, 1868. In *Marx-Engels Collected Works* Vol 43 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1988), 31.

A couple weeks after Marx's death, Engels would send a letter to the Russian philosopher Pyotr Lavrov letting him know he had gathered some of the manuscripts Marx had left. He mentions that the first thing he would look for was an outline on dialectics Marx intended to write. He tells him that,

> *Tomorrow I shall at last have time enough to devote several hours to going through all the manuscripts that Moor has left us, in particular an outline of dialectics which he had always intended to do. But he always refrained from telling us how far his work had progressed, for he was aware that, once people realised something was ready, he would be pestered until he consented to its publication.*[4]

Engels would eventually be met with the unfortunate surprise that Marx had never gotten to write his '2 or 3' sheets.

Since Marx never got to write his text on dialectics, and since Engels never put himself up to the task of doing so, what they considered to be the 'rational aspect' and the 'mystical shell' has been largely an open question for subsequent Marxist scholarship.[5] There are, nonetheless, three central and interconnected images they provide throughout their lives for how they view their relation to Hegel *in toto*, and to his dialectical method in particular.

1. Inversion: In various places Marx and Engels say that Hegel's method, as it stands, is "unusable," or "inapplicable."[6] This is because with Hegel the dialectical method "stood on its head" (*verkehrt*), their task is to "[turn] it right side up again," to have it be "placed on its feet."[7] This topsy-turvy language

---

4. Friedrich Engels, "Engels to Pyotr Lavrov," April 2, 1883. In *Marx-Engels Collected Works* Vol 47 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1995), 3.

5. To be clear, Engels does write about dialectics in a far more systematic manner than Marx. Specifically, in his unfinished magnus opus, published in 1925 as *Dialectics of Nature*, there are a couple loose manuscripts which might fit the role of Marx's task. However, these were 1- unfinished, and 2- not intended to be an 'outline' of dialectics. Therefore, we are left with the evidence in Marx and Engels' texts, manuscripts, and letters to help us infer what their response to the question would have been. The open character the question contains has allowed even diametrically opposed interpretations to arise.

6. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 43. Friedrich Engels (1859), Review of "Karl Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), International Publishers (1999), 223.

7. Engels, Review of "Karl Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy", 224. Marx, *Capital*, 20. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 44.

appears as early as 1844 in their joint text, *The Holy Family*, and can also be seen in Engels' review of Marx's *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), and in Marx's afterward to the second German edition of *Capital* (1873).

2. Rational Kernel/ Mystical Shell: The second most used phrase states that there is a "rational kernel" in Hegel's dialectics that, because it is on its head, cannot be grasped.[8] Once the dialectic is on its feet, one could parcel out the rational kernel from the "mystical shell."[9] This phrasing is combined with the 'inversion' image in Marx's afterward to the second German edition of *Capital* (1873). It stands alone in the 1868 letter to Ludwig Kugelmann quoted above. The full quote from the second German edition of *Capital* is also referenced in the omitted preface to *Anti-Dühring*, which ended up being included in the more complete version of *Dialectics of Nature.*[10]

3. Sublation: The least used image says that Marx and Engels 'sublate' Hegel. The only place where this description could be found is in Engels' *Ludwig Feuerbach* (1886), where it appears once.

Although they make up three images, I will show that they're all compatible and somewhat overlap in meaning. To comprehensively understand what each of them means, they must be understood together. Let us attempt to do that now.

Inversion

The first thing that must be asked about the inversion image is – what is upside down about Hegel's dialectic? For Marx, what is upside down is also what allows his "dialectical method" to "not only be different from the Hegelian, but [its] direct opposite."[11] He says that for

> *Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of 'the Idea,' he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world*

8. Marx, *Capital Vol. 1*, 20.
9. Ibid.
10. Complete in the sense that it did not leave out any manuscripts.
11. Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 19.

> *is only the external, phenomenal form of 'the Idea.' With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.*[12]

What he is referring to here is Hegel's notion of the actualization or realization of Spirit or Idea into both nature and human history, the former which is seen in the transition from his 'Logic' to his 'Philosophy of Nature' in his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, and the later which can be seen in his *Philosophy of History*. Let us examine how this externalization thesis appears in Hegel's view of nature and history, and how it is inverted by the materialist dialectic.

1.0 The Idea and Nature

For Hegel, as Charles Taylor correctly depicts, "the world exists to realize the Idea."[13] The Idea, as the last category of Hegel's logic, "englobes all that has gone before," and shows itself (albeit at the end) to be – as Marx labeled it – the demiurgos of the world.[14] Thereby, "nature," as Hegel states, is merely "a representation of the idea."[15] "Nature," for Hegel, "is the creation of Spirit."[16]

In Hegel's logic, the Idea is the final category arrived at, having for its content the "whole breadth of ground" of all former 'moments.'[17] He says that

> *Its true content is only the whole system of which we have been hitherto studying the development. It may also be said in this strain that the absolute idea is the universal, but the universal not merely as an abstract form to which the particular content is a stranger, but as the absolute form, into which all the categories, the whole fullness of the content it has given being to, have retired.*[18]

---

12. Ibid.
13. Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 329.
14. Ibid, 330.
15. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, trans by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 17.
16. G. W. F. Hegel, *Logic: Part One of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans by William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 294 (§ 239).
17. Ibid, 293 (§ 237).
18. Ibid.

The previous categories in Hegel's logic are limited images of the Idea; he says, "each of the stages hitherto reviewed is an image of the absolute, but at first in a limited way, and thus it is forced onwards to the whole."[19] The Idea is not simply a final point, it is a whole whose emptiness necessitates its self-sundering; a process of "immanent dialectical" movement – first taking the form of transition (Being), then reflection (Essence), and lastly, development (Concept) – to arrive at its self-awareness as the "one systematic whole."[20] This mediated return to the immediacy of itself as whole then goes "forth freely as Nature."[21]

For Hegel, not only does nature require the Idea qua demiurgos to bring it into existence, but any development in 'nature' is only a development of the concept – nature itself can undergo no development. Hegel is unwilling to "confer" the dialectical power found in the concept to nature.[22] For Hegel, "the only thing which can really develop is the concept."[23] Hence, he argues that "nature has no history."[24] The various stages of Hegel's treatment of nature (from mechanism to organic life) is devoid of any conception of a dialectics at play in nature. At most what one finds is a very basic level of concreteness in his treatment of organic life, i.e., a still abstract understanding of the interconnectedness and complexity of organic life. For Hegel, as Evald Ilyenkov argues, "nature is abstract through and through, metaphysical in its very essence: all of nature's phenomena are *side by side* with one another, *isolated* from one another, lying outside one another. As Hegel puts it, nature falls within itself into its abstract moments, into separate things, objects, processes, existing side by side with one another and independently from one another. At best, genuine dialectics is only vaguely reflected or dimly looms in nature."[25]

---

19. Ibid.
20. Ibid, 278 (§ 215), 224 (§ 161), 295 (§ 242).
21. Ibid, 296 (§ 244).
22. Taylor, *Hegel*, 354.
23. Ibid.
24. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1977), 178. – If we understand history as Hegel does in his *Philosophy of History*, then all would accept that indeed nature does not have a history, that is, there is no collective *conception* of progress. However, if we conceive of history as development, then one can say (especially after Darwin) that nature indeed has a history. I think that Hegel's emphasis on limiting developmental movement to the concept would allow him to hold the previous position on nature and history, even if one understands history in the later, broader sense.
25. Evald Ilyenkov, *The Dialectics of the Abstract and Concrete in Marx's Capital* (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2022), 150.

The young Marx had already criticized in his 1843-44 manuscripts the externalization thesis in Hegel. While for Hegel "nature [presents] itself as the Idea in the form of otherness," Marx rejected the primacy Hegel gave the Idea over nature and argued that Hegel places upon nature an 'intrinsic deficiency'; for him "nature is something defective… in itself – intrinsically – [it] has something outside itself which it lacks."[26] He was right, for Hegel, nature "estranged from the Idea… 'is merely the corpse of the understanding.' " [27]

The categorial character of the dialectical development present in Hegel's logic leads to the category of the Idea externalizing itself in nature and human universal history in order to pass from mere potentiality to actuality. For Marx and Engels this is upside-down. For them, it is only "from the history of nature and human society that the laws of dialectics are abstracted."[28] Although Hegel got the fundamental laws right, his "mistake lies in the fact that these laws are foisted on nature and history as laws of thought, and not deduced from them."[29] Instead, one must understand that "in reality it is the reverse: the dialectics of the mind is only the reflection of the forms of motion of the real world, both of nature and of [human] history."[30] The distinction between the dialectical character of the world and our understanding of it will be captured by Engels' concepts of objective and subjective dialectics. Objective dialectics "prevails throughout nature," and subjective dialectics "is only the reflection of the motion through opposites which asserts itself everywhere in nature, and which by the continual conflict of the opposites and their final passage into one another, or into higher forms, determines the life of nature."[31]

For Marx and Engels, the dialectical method needs to be flipped on its feet because in Hegel it is principally understood as the development of the Idea or Spirit, what Engels would call subjective dialectics. Subjective dialectics, for Hegel, requires its externalization into nature and history to actualize itself. It is here, then, subjective dialectics which breathes life into objective dialectics. In other words, it is the dialectical development of the Idea which leads to the dialectical development in nature, and in a more developed form in universal

---

26. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 13; Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), 167.
27. Taylor, *Hege*l., pp. 354.
28. Friedrich Engels, *Dialectics of Nature* (London: Wellred Books, 2012), 63.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid, 206.
31. Ibid, 214.

history. For Marx and Engels, on the contrary, it is the dialectical character of nature, and the dialectical character of human societies necessarily grounded on nature, which allows us to know the dialectical character of the Ideal. In the Marxist view, "nature is the test of dialectics," not the other way around.[32] Even further, as we will see in the following section, it is the dialectical interaction, grounded on labor, of humans with each other and nature which allows for the development of thought as an emergent quality in the human being.[33]

Furthermore, to claim that nature is governed by dialectical laws is simultaneously to claim that nature has a history, that is, that all throughout nature one can see development, both gradual and abrupt, both quantitative and qualitative. This is one of the central reasons for Marx and Engels' immense appreciation of Darwin's theory of evolution. Although they had their critiques,[34] they saw Darwin's discoveries (along with the discovery of the cell and energy) as a colossal proof of dialectical interconnection and development in nature.[35] This historical understanding of nature was greatly appreciated by the Nobel Laureate chemist Ilya Prigogine, who stressed the importance of accepting a "historical development of nature" to overcome the prevailing "mechanistic world view."[36] The "idea of a history of nature," he said, "as an integral part of materialism was asserted by Marx and, in greater detail, by Engels."[37][38] The conception that nature itself has a history, one which we can

---

32. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, 21.

33. This is what has been called as of recent emergentist dialectics. I treat this in the following chapter "On the Marxist Dialectic." For more, see Kaan Kangal, "Engels's Emergentist Dialectics," *Monthly Review* (November 2020).

34. An excellent modern version of a Marxist critique of Darwin can be seen in Richard Lewontin and Richard Levins 1985 text, *The Dialectical Biologist.* Specifically, they rigorously critique Darwin's view on species adaptation as 'Cartesian,' and hold that a dialectical understanding of organisms as subject-object (as changing and changed by their environment) is scientifically superior.

35. See Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 46-7.

36. Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature* (London: Verso Books, 2017), 287.

37. Ibid, 286

38. It is important to note that the question of dialectics and nature has been at the core of the 20th century 'Engels debate' in Marxist scholarship. This is, in my opinion, a debate which shouldn't exist at all – there is overwhelming evidence against the charlatans which attempt to split Marx from Engels on the question of dialectics of nature and other adjacent matters, and there is, on the contrary, nothing more than psychological speculation on the side of the anti-Engels crowd. However, if the reader is interested in further accessing this debate for themselves, I would recommend Kaan Kangal's *Friedrich Engels and the Dialectics of Nature* (2020), or, for a briefer glance at his arguments, my review of his book " 'Friedrich Engels and the Dialectics of Nature,' by: Kaan Kangal," *Monthly Review Online* (February 13, 2022).

know reflectively through the study of nature, is generally accepted today. For this, the Marxist tradition's inversion of Hegel's dialectic is in large part to be thanked.

However, Marx and Engels, unlike Hegel, had the opportunity to think alongside breakthroughs in the sciences which confirmed their hypothesis on the dialectics of nature. Hegel's limitation in this area might as well have been the general limitation of his time. In other words, the absence of dialectics in nature is, in Hegel, merely a projection onto nature of the undialectical understanding of nature prevailing in the sciences. This argument is eloquently elaborated by Evald Ilyenkov:

> *The idealist nature of Hegel's philosophy is here revealed in a very striking manner: he directly attributes the metaphysical limitations of contemporary natural science, the* knowledge of nature, to nature itself *as its eternal property… Wherein lies the falsity of this Hegelian construction? First of all in his taking the historically limited conceptions of contemporary natural science, which did not, indeed, contain conscious dialectics, to be the absolute characteristics of nature itself. As for the fact that nature as a whole is an actually developing integral system of forms of motion of matter mutually conditioning one another, that nature as a whole, including man, is the real,* objective concreteness, *this fact is mystified by Hegel in his system, in which the abstract, that is, the mechanism, is the manifestation of* spiritual *concreteness. He credits no form of motion, apart from the motion of thinking reason, the sphere of concepts, with an immanent concreteness, that is, with real mutual conditioning of phenomena within a natural whole.*[39]

2.0 The Idea and Universal History

Hegel doesn't just take the Idea to be the demiurgos of nature, but of human universal history too,

---

I would also highly recommend Paul Blackledge's article for *Monthly Review* (May 2020) "Engels vs. Marx?: Two Hundred Years of Frederick Engels."

39. Ilyenkov, *The Dialectics of the Abstract and Concrete*, 150-1.

> *Like the soul-conductor Mercury, the Idea is in truth, the leader of peoples and of the World; and Spirit, the rational and necessitated will of that conductor, is and has been the director of the events of the World's History.*[40]

For Hegel the Idea unfolds itself in universal history, it has a "design [that] is destined to be realized."[41] Put in religious terms, he says, this is the manifestation of providence in universal history. He writes,

> *Divine Wisdom, i.e., Reason, is one and the same in the great as in the little; and we must not imagine God to be too weak to exercise his wisdom on the grand scale. Our intellectual striving aims at realizing the conviction that what was intended by eternal wisdom, is actually accomplished in the domain of existent, active Spirit, as well as in that of mere Nature. Our mode of treating the subject is, in this aspect, a Theodicaea – a justification of the ways of God.*[42]

However, this unfolding in universal history is realized through human practice, through the activity of human beings. The "plan of existence" is "hidden, undeveloped essence, which as such – however true in itself – is not completely real."[43] As a non-actuated "plan of existence" the Idea is merely potential,

> *A second element must be introduced in order to produce actuality – viz., actuation, realization; and whose motive power is the Will – the activity of man in the widest sense. It is only by this activity that that Idea as well as abstract characteristics generally, are realized, actualized; for of themselves they are powerless.*[44]

Before it unfolds itself through human activity in universal history, the Idea is as empty as the category of Being was at the beginning of the logic. Being

---

40. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 8.
41. Ibid, 16.
42. Ibid, 15.
43. Ibid, 22.
44. Ibid.

needed to take a determinate form, but the first determinate form it took, although more concrete than pure Being, was still too abstract. The logic depicts the process through which what was implicit, potential, and unactualized in Being, gets actualized (through immanent negations and sublations) in its dialectical development towards the Idea. It is a process that goes from abstract to concrete, from the indeterminate, to the most determinate. Similarly, before it unfolds into universal history the Idea stands in a commensurable position to Being; only by negating its immediate purity does it create the conditions for the possibility for its actualizing in the development of universal history. Having freedom for its essence, it is at first freedom in form merely, unrealized freedom. By actualizing itself in world history, it concretizes in the historical "progress of the consciousness of Freedom."[45]

This actualizing task is no longer merely achievable through logical deduction (as it was in the logic), it requires – for its unfolding in universal history – the activity of human beings exerting their "natural will."[46] In this unfolding of the "history of the world, the Individuals we have to do with are Peoples."[47] There is a dialectical interaction between the will of peoples and the ultimate 'plan of existence.' The former (will) implies freedom, the latter (plan) implies necessity. Yet, the two are necessarily bound together. This is what Hegel calls the "cunning of reason," namely,

> *manifestations of vitality on the part of individuals and peoples, in which they seek and satisfy their own purposes, are, at the same time, the means and instruments of a higher and broader purpose of which they know nothing – which they realize unconsciously.* [48]

As Terry Pinkard notes, this cunning of reason refers to the process through which "the teleological goal of history… elicits just those conditions that provoke individuals acting on their own interests to act in the service of some larger goal."[49] G. V. Plekhanov described it as a process whereby "whole peoples are blind instruments of the spirit," where spirit "forces them to work

45. Ibid, 17, 19.
46. Ibid, 25.
47. Ibid, 14.
48. Ibid, 33, 25.
49. Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Dialectic* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 164.

for it by holding out to them the bait of their private aims and urging them on with the spur of passion, without which nothing great is done in history."[50]

We have then, in Hegel, the notion of what Marx and Engels would call *practice*. As early as the 1845 writing of the "11 Thesis on Feuerbach," [51] Marx set out to critique the "chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism," namely, its bifurcation of subject and object – its inability to understand the world "as human sensuous activity," as "practice."[52] It can be said that the critique of the young Hegelians given in Marx's '11 Thesis' is itself a Hegelian critique.[53] V. I. Lenin shares this sentiment in his 'Conspectus of Hegel's *Science of Logic'* where he says "Marx… clearly sides with Hegel in introducing the criterion of practice into the theory of knowledge: see the Theses on Feuerbach."[54] This notion of practice as the sphere in which thought is realized is fundamental to what makes Marxist dialectical materialism different from previous 'crude' and 'mechanistic' forms of materialism.

Human practice is also the ground for Marx's concept of the Ideal. However, neither Marx nor Engels developed this concept further. Instead, it was the Soviet philosopher Evald Ilyenkov who took upon the task of systematically developing the Marxist notion of the Ideal in his *Dialectical Logic* and other texts. Ilyenkov recognized the world-historic value of Hegel's depiction of the "objectification of thought" through human practice and said this development "made a fundamental advance in the understanding of thought and in the science of thought."[55] The Marxist conception of the Ideal, which Ilyenkov would systematize, held that the Ideal was the "real objective activity of man as the active agent of social production."[56] This development helped enrichen the materialist dialectic's conception of the realm of ideas. Ideas could be understood to have an objective character grounded in the material practices of a specific mode of life. Through the development of the concept of the Ideal we

50. G. V. Plekhanov, "For the Sixtieth Anniversary of Hegel's Death (1891)," In *Selected Philosophical Works Vol. I* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 418.

51. Which would come to be found and published for the first time in Engels' 1886 *Ludwig Feuerbach*.

52. Karl Marx, *The Essential Marx: The Non-Economic Writings*, Ed by Saul K. Padover (New York: Mentor Book, 1979), 304.

53. For more on Marx's 11 Theses on Feuerbach, see my article: Carlos L. Garrido. "A Guide to Marx's Theses on Feuerbach," *World Marxist Review* 1(1) (2024): https://doi.org/10.62834/0hv57253

54. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works Vol. 38* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 212.

55. Evald Ilyenkov (1974), *Dialectical Logic* (Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, 2014), 122.

56. Ibid, 155.

can speak, from the standpoint of dialectical materialism, about the 'spirit of an age' (*zeitgeist*), and incorporate, in a materialist and more concrete form, something akin to Hegel's philosophy of history.

The kinship in the notion of practice in Hegel and Marx has led some to erroneously claim the pair have identical methods. For instance, the English Marxist philosopher Ian Fraser argues that "Hegel's and Marx's dialectic are not opposites, are not a supersession of one over the other, but are instead intrinsically similar, one and the same, two of a kind."[57] This is because, he argues, "the dialectical movement of the subject, real living individuals, is grasped, by Hegel, through the manifestation of the Will in society."[58] To defend Hegel, Fraser says that "Hegel is [wrongly] accused… of remaining at the level of theory, distinct from practice, and of ignoring man's self-activity in creating the world."[59] For Fraser, Marxists don't need to change anything about Hegel's dialectic, it is already, as C. L. R. James said, "a very materialist form of dialectic."[60]

These are the sorts of theoretical mistakes that take place when identity is not understood as mediated through difference. There is, indeed, great similarities in the Marxist and Hegelian dialectics. C. L. R. James is right in saying there is an embryonic potential for a materialist dialectic in Hegel. Engels himself said that the "Hegelian system represents merely a materialism idealistically turned upside down."[61] Joseph Dietzgen, a German worker and philosopher who Marx and Engels said had discovered the materialist dialectics independent of them, shared a similar sentiment with respect to Hegel. He said in 1873 that the "Hegelian system of philosophy…[was] a materialism in disguise."[62] Lenin would definitely agree that there is immense fruitfulness in interpreting Hegel's work "materialistically."[63] In his 1922 essay "On the Significance of Militant Materialism," he argued the journal *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* ("Under the Banner of Marxism") "should be a kind of 'Society of Materialist Friends of

57. Ian Fraser, "Two of a Kind: Hegel, Marx, Dialectic and Form," *Capital and Class* 21(1) (1997) pp. 81-106 doi:10.1177/030981689706100105, 82.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid, 88.

60. C. L. R. James, *Notes on Dialectics* (New York: Allison and Busby, 1980), 57.

61. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 24.

62. Joseph Dietzgen, "Scientific Socialism," *Volksataat* (1873), Retrieved from *Marxist Internet Archive*: https://www.marxists.org/archive/dietzgen/works/1870s/scientific-socialism.htm

63. Lenin, *CW 38*, 104.

Hegelian Dialectics.' "[64] For Lenin, "the germs of [dialectical and] historical materialism" were already "in Hegel."[65] Hegel, he said, "brings one within a hand's grasp of [dialectical] materialism."[66] Reading Hegel helped Lenin see how "intelligent idealism is closer to intelligent materialism than stupid [crude] materialism."[67] However, none of these accounts would go as far as saying, as Fraser does, that the Marxist and Hegelian dialectics are 'one and the same.'

Fraser's argument ignores that while there are definite similarities in the Hegelian and Marxist dialectics, and while it is certainly the case – as Lenin thought – that a materialist reading of Hegel is bound to bear fruit, he forgets, however, that there is also great difference. Such difference makes Fraser's homogenizing claims worrisome, since if accepted what makes the Marxist dialectic an advancement of the Hegelian is ignored, i.e., the historical advancement of dialectical philosophy into a richer worldview is nullified. Unlike Fraser claims, the Marxist position is not simply that Hegel ignores practice, but that practice is reduced to being merely the means through which the Idea actualizes itself. Practice is merely mediation, negation, for the ultimate actualization of the Idea. To borrow the language of Hegel's logic, the Idea in Hegel is the point of departure – it is empty immediacy which necessarily mediates itself through practice to return to itself as mediated immediacy. The Idea incarnates itself in human practice and develops through universal history in order to actualize itself. As Ilyenkov put it, in Hegel "thought was transformed into the only active and creative force, and the external world into its field of application."[68] This is, indeed, and "upside-down representation."[69] It is, as Ilyenkov noted, a rehashed version of John 1:1's 'in the beginning was the word,' except in the beginning was the Idea. "Hegel starts his dialectics," as Alfred Sohn-Rethel notes, "by a process of the mind within the mind."[70] The "Hegelian concept of dialectic," Sohn-Rethel writes, "finally entitles the mind not only to primacy over manual

64. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works Vol. 33*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), 234.
65. Lenin, *CW 38*, 299, 189, 309.
66. Lenin, *CW 38*, 233.
67. Lenin, *CW 38*, 274.
68. Ilyenkov, *Dialectical Logic*, 139.
69. Ibid, 137.
70. Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978), 16.

work but endows it with omnipotence."[71] As such, it requires an inversion to be turned off its head and on its feet.

This is precisely what Marxism does, it gives primacy to the practical activity involved in securing human subsistence; it does not "descend from heaven to earth," but "ascends from earth to heaven."[72] For Marxists, the "first historical act is… the production of the means to satisfy needs" – [eating, drinking, habitation, etc.] – that is, "the production of material life itself."[73] As Marx and Engels wrote in 1845, "life is not determined by consciousness [the Idea], but consciousness [the Idea] by life."[74] If the history of the Ideal is "viewed apart from real history, these abstractions have in themselves no value whatsoever."[75] This is the direct antithesis of Hegel, who held that when devoid of the Idea neither nature nor human society is at all historical. In Hegel the Idea is the protagonist of history, practice is merely the suit it wears to do its stunts. In Marxism, practice – specifically relating to the production of material life – is the protagonist of human history; its reflection in the Ideal is but the reporter of this protagonist role.

Historical practice is also not simply, as Hegel conceived of it, a result of human will. As Marx says in his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*,

> *In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations,* which are independent of their will*, namely, relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production.*[76]

Marx would go on to say that "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness."[77] The human will is understood to be historically conditioned, not by the 'plan of existence' of the Idea, but by the real material conditions of

---

71. Ibid, 17-18.
72. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (New York: International Publishers, 1993), 47.
73. Ibid, 48.
74. Ibid, 47.
75. Ibid, 48.
76. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 20.
77. Ibid, 21.

the historical epoch the individual is situated in. These material conditions include Hegel's civil society, i.e., the "legal and political superstructure" where the "definite forms of social consciousness" of the epoch are institutionalized, but – and here is the key difference – civil society is understood to have its "real foundation" in the "economic structure of society," that is, in the forces and relations of production of a given historical period.[78] As Marx would go on to famously say in his *18th Brumaire on Louis Bonaparte*,

> *Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.*[79]

There is, then, in Marxism also an inverted reinterpretation of Hegel's cunning of reason. Human beings act as if they were expressing their individual will alone – but this individual will is determined by historical circumstances. Thereby, every human action contains the unity of individual will and historical necessity. Individual actions have latent effects which perpetuate – sometimes consciously, sometimes not – the larger and broader engine of historical progress. Engels makes this clear in his *Ludwig Feuerbach*,

> *Historical events thus appear on the whole to be likewise governed by chance. But where on the surface accident holds sway, there actually it is always governed by inner, hidden laws and it is only a matter of discovering these laws. Men make their own history, whatever its outcome may be, in that each follows his own consciously desired end, and it is precisely the resultant of these many wills operating in different directions and of their manifold effects upon the outer world that constitutes history.*[80]

This is, on the surface, the same teleological structure of Hegel's cunning of reason. The central difference is this – the engine of historical change, the inner

---

78. Ibid, 20.

79. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 10.

80. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 49.

necessity manifesting itself latently through individual wills, is not some plan of existence set out by an empty Absolute Idea in need of actualization, but is materially inscribed in the dialectical development of both nature and human society. In human history, it is the dialectical struggle of classes with antagonistic interests which serves as the driving force; hence, "the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles."[81]

Evald Ilyenkov summarized this distinction perfectly in his comparison of Hegel's and Marx's understanding of the concrete. I quote here at length:

> *For Hegel, economy, the universal concrete substance of anything that is human – reasonable will – appears in an extremely one-sided and abstract form. The sphere of men's economic activity is not, therefore, a* concrete *system of interaction of men and things, emerging and developing* irrespective of the will and consciousness *of individuals. It cannot constitute the subject-matter of a special science and can only be considered in a system of universal definitions of reasonable will, i.e. within the philosophy of spirit, within the philosophy of state law. Here it appears as one of the specific spheres of the activity of reason, as an abstract form of revelation of reason acting in history.*
>
> *It is not difficult to see the diametric opposition between the views of Marx and Hegel of economy, of the nature of its dialectical interconnection with all the other manifestations of social life, and of its role in the social whole.*
>
> *On this point, Marx opposes Hegel as a* materialist first *and foremost. The most interesting feature here is, however, that it is* materialism *that enables him to develop a more profound view of the dialectics of the subject matter.*
>
> *For Marx, the sphere of economic interaction of men is a fully* concrete *sphere of social life with its own specific immanent laws of motion. In other words, it appears to be relatively independent of all other forms of social activity of men and precisely for this reason constitutes the subject-matter of a special science. The system of economic interaction between men emerges as a historically arising and historically developed system, all aspects of which are mutually connected with one another through unity of origin.*

81. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," In *Marx, Engels, Lenin: On Historical Materialism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 84.

> *It is important to stress that the system of economic relations is a system that is not only* relatively *but also* absolutely *independent of the will and consciousness of individuals, although the latter's will and consciousness do play a most active role in its formation. The very nature of this participation of conscious will in the formation of the system is determined by the system of economic relations itself incorporating men endowed with will and consciousness, rather than by the 'nature of the spirit', beforehand and from the outside. In other words, will and reason themselves appear here as modi of some other substance, as its abstract manifestations and products. All definitions of the will and consciousness of individuals involved in the development of the economic system are literally* deduced *from the nature of internal self-movement of the system as a whole, interpreted as* products *of the movement of this system.*
>
> *Thus, from this point of view everything looks exactly the reverse as compared to the Hegelian construction: everything is right side up. It is materialism that acts as the principal cause and condition of the fact that dialectics is applied to the understanding of economy in a full measure and much more comprehensively than it is generally possible to do from the Hegelian positions.*[82]

The primacy of material practice and labor is further refined in Engels' 1876 essay "The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man." In this unfinished and posthumously published essay, Engels argues that labor allowed for the development of the modern hand, and subsequently, that the positive influence this development had on the rest of the organism, eventually led to speech, rational capabilities, and modern society. He concludes, then, with the proclamation that "labour created man himself."[83] Stephen Jay Gould, perhaps the most famous American paleontologist and evolutionary biologist of the 20th century, was extremely influenced by Engels' work and his understanding that the "hand is not only the organ of labor, it is also the product of labor."[84] In Gould's 1987 book *An Urchin in the Storm* he would go on to say that "the best

---

82. Evald Ilyenkov, *The Dialectic of the Abstract and Concrete in Marx's Capital* (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2022), 153-4.

83. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, 172.

84. Ibid, 174. This is also referenced in Stephen Jay Gould, *Ever Since Darwin: Reflections in Natural History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), 210.

nineteenth-century case for gene-culture coevolution was made by Friedrich Engels in his remarkable essay of 1876."[85]

To claim the primacy of the Idea is, for Marxists, equivalent to putting the real state of affairs on its head. For Marxists, the point of departure is labor, the practice humans engage in – sometimes willfully, sometimes not – in the production of material life. The development of the species through labor creates the conditions for the possibility of reason, that is, human consciousness, the realm of the Ideal, are all dialectically emergent qualities and capabilities of labor-determined human development. Hegel is right to lay focus on interconnection, movement, contradiction, etc., but that which remains true in his philosophy is despite of, not because of, the primacy he gives to the Idea. Inverting Hegel's inversion is the first crack at removing the rational kernel's mystical shell. This materialist inversion of Hegel was an image provided already by Ludwig Feuerbach, who in falling short in his mechanistic materialism, was unable to complete the task of sublating Hegel through the rational kernel in his dialectical method.[86] Once the primacy of nature and human practice is established, then one can understand the dialectical character of these, and the reflected forms they take in the realm of the Ideal.

Hegel failed to see how the Idea presupposes and is determined by practice. In other words, he was unable to see how the ground (*grund*) of the Idea is found in the economic forces of society. The discovery of the dialectical character of nature and human practice grounds subjective dialectics and is a further step towards a more concrete knowledge of the world. In this Marxist inversion, the drive towards concreteness that is at the heart of Hegelian philosophy is recaptured and expanded in the Marxist critique of Hegel's idealism. Or in other words, Marxism takes one of the central principles of Hegelian philosophy further than Hegel himself – it is a Hegelian extension of Hegel beyond Hegel. In this sense, Slavoj Žižek is right in saying in *Absolute Recoil* that "dialectical materialism is the only true philosophical inheritor" of

---

85. Stephen Jay Gould, *An Urchin in the Storm: Essays About Books and Ideas* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), 111.

86. In his 1842 essay "Provisional Theses on the Reformation of Philosophy," Feuerbach argues that "The truth of the finite is articulated by the absolute philosophy only in an *indirect* and *inverted* manner… Hence we need only *invert* speculative philosophy and then have the unmasked, pure, bare truth." Ludwig Feuerbach, "Provisional Theses for the Reformation of Philosophy," In Lawrence S. Stepelevich, *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology* (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 160, 157.

Hegelian philosophy.[87] This is a sentiment shared by Henri Lefebvre, who says that dialectical materialism is "more Hegelian than Hegelianism."[88] It is also express by Evald Ilyenkov in 1970, where he says in an article for *Pravda* that "the rational kernel of Hegel's philosophy – dialectics as logic and contemporary materialism's theory of scientific cognition – lives these days only in one form, in its Marxist-Leninist interpretation and application to the study of the external world, to the scientific reflection on the objective laws of the material world and the perspectives of its development that takes place independently of human wishes and desires."[89] "The method of ascent from the abstract to the concrete [i.e., the dialectical method] as a universal law to which scientific development is subject," argues Ilyenkov elsewhere, "was formulated by Hegel… but it became an actual method of development of *concrete scientific* knowledge only in the hands of Marx who gave it a materialist substantiation."[90]

It is important to also note that Hegel cannot be fully blamed for this inversion, for the development of the productive forces had yet to occur in Germany as they had been already taking place in England in the first quarter of the 19th century. This universal law of human social history became available to human knowing only after the productive forces reached a level where the antagonistic character of the relations of production showed itself. Only at this specific historical point could that which was implicit in all human history become explicit and open itself to human knowing. Marx makes this clear in the third section of the introduction (Notebook M) of the *Grundrisse*, where he says that,

> *Bourgeois society is the most developed and the most complex historic organization of production. The categories which express its relations, the comprehension of its structure, thereby also allows insights into the structure and the relations of production of all the vanished social formations out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up, whose partly still unconquered remnants are carried along within it, whose mere nuances have developed explicit significance within it, etc. Human*

87. Slavoj Žižek, *Absolute Recoil*, (New York: Verso Books, 2015), 4.

88. Henri Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 92.

89. Evald Ilyenkov, *Intelligent Materialism: Essays on Hegel and Dialectics*, trans. and ed. by Evgeni V. Pavlov (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2020).

90. Ilyenkov, *The Dialectics of the Abstract and Concrete*, 167.

> *anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape. The intimations of higher development among the subordinate animal species, however, can be understood only after the higher development is already known. The bourgeois economy thus supplies the key to the ancient, etc.*[91]

Hegel's flaw, then, has its source in the same undeveloped character of the productive forces which limited the socialism of Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, and Robert Owen to a utopian character.[92] One can only provide a concrete understanding of the capitalist mode of life when this mode of life has itself matured and concretized. One cannot provide, for instance, a concrete assessment of the *Godfather* trilogy in 1973, before part two and three are released. It is only after the object of one's study has itself concretized to its matured form that one can have a concrete knowledge of it. Hegel's faults, in part, are rooted in the undeveloped stage of capitalism's existence he was limited to analyzing because of historical circumstances.

Towards the end of his life Hegel had begun to see some of the effects of capitalist industrial development and wrote in his *Philosophy of Right* that there was a tendency in the "inner dialectic of civil society" which "greatly facilitates the concentration of disproportionate wealth in a few hands" while "the standard of living of a large mass of people falls below a certain subsistence level."[93] Hegel's observation on this dialectic in civil society led Plekhanov to exclaim that "Hegel understood more clearly than all economists of his time, not excepting even Ricardo, that in a society which is based on private property, the growth of wealth, on the one hand, is inevitably accompanied by the growth of poverty, on the other."[94] Hegel's critique of this contradiction, however, remained in the realm or 'moment' of distribution (which is where the utopians also had their focus), and hence, was not seen as an effect of the moment of production, that is, as the result of productive relations between antagonistic classes.[95]

---

91. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 105.

92. See Engels *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, or Marx and Engels' *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, specifically chapter three section three on "Critical-Utopian Socialism and Communism."

93. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 151, 150.

94. Plekhanov, "For the Sixtieth Anniversary of Hegel's Death.," 415.

95. Plekhanov also sees a connection here between Hegel's critique of political economy and the utopians,' specifically in the most advanced form it took in the theories of Charles Fourier.

Rational Kernel and Sublation

The inversion image is by far the most often used by Marx and Engels. After having covered its meaning and significance thoroughly in the previous section, most of the ground has already been laid for answering the following two questions concerning the other two images they use to paint their relation to Hegel's dialectic – 1) what is the rational kernel in Hegel's philosophy? and 2) how does the Marxist dialectic sublate the Hegelian? Through answering the first, the second is simultaneously answered as well.

To sublate (*aufhebung*) includes the dual process of canceling and preserving. Sublation does not mean complete annihilation, and neither does it mean reproduction, that is, the Marxist dialectics is neither a wholesale rejection of the Hegelian nor an imitation of it. The process of sublation refers to the partial rejection, and partial preservation, of the old into the new. It is the process through which that which is implicit and potential in the old emerges out of it as something qualitatively superior. To say that the Marxist dialectics sublated the Hegelian simply means that the less rational part of the Hegelian system is rejected, and the most rational part of the Hegelian method preserved. At the same time, it is the making explicit of something which was already implicit in the Hegelian dialectics, that is, the drive towards a more concrete understanding of the world that is central to the Hegelian method was bound to clash with the upside down and idealist character it was dressed in as the functionary of the Idea demiurgos. As Engels said, Marxism would come to draw the "necessary conclusions from [Hegel's] method."[96]

In the last section we saw that the upside-down character of Hegel's dialectic is a result of the primacy he gives to the idea, and the mediational role he gives to nature and human practice. By prioritizing the primacy of nature and human social practice (specifically at the economic level), and the secondary and reflectional character of the Ideal, Marxism flips dialectics back on its feet – it becomes a materialist dialectic. In other words, Marxism "comprehend[s] the concepts in our heads… as images of real things instead of regarding real things as images of this or that stage of development of the absolute concept."[97] In this inversion, the lion's share of the mystical shell is already removed, namely, the idealist wrapping which turned the Idea (which is the ontologically last to

96. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 12-13.
97. Ibid, 44.

emerge) into the demiurgos of the world. The rational kernel is what is left when the inversion removes the mystical wrappings, that is,

> *the science of the general laws of motion – both of the external world and of human thought – two sets of laws which are identical in substance, but differ in their expression in so far as the human mind can apply them consciously, while in nature and also up to now for the most part in human history, these laws assert themselves unconsciously in the form of external necessity in the midst of an endless series of seeming accidents.*[98]

Another way to describe what is taken from Hegel is to say that his method (dialectics) is kept, and his system (the idealist wrapping) is rejected. This is how Engels came to describe their relationship to Hegel in *Ludwig Feuerbach*. For Engels (and one may add Marx as well), there is a tension within Hegelian philosophy between a revolutionary method, which holds the truth enunciated by Mephisto in Goethe's *Faust* – "all that comes to be deserves to perish wretchedly," and the conservative system, best depicted by the frequently misinterpreted (and mistranslated) epithet from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* – "what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational."[99] In addition, Engels adds Hegel's closing of the system, that is, his postulation of the "end of all history" (another historically misunderstood statement) arrived at when "mankind" gets to the "cognition of the absolute Idea" reached in Hegelian philosophy, as another central aspect of the conservative side.[100]

Remark: The Conservative Hegel Misreading

Although not directly related to the topic we are pursuing in this section, it is important to note how the 'what is actual is rational' and the "Europe is the absolute end of history" quotes have been misunderstood since Hegel's time.[101] The former has usually been used to defame Hegel as a conservative 'state-philosopher' and defender of the status-quo; the latter as a maniac who

98. Ibid.

99. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, Ed. By Walter Kaufmann (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 161. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 10.

100. Engel, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 13.

101. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 103.

thinks that "nothing new or important would ever happen again."[102] These are of course, incorrect readings.

The first quote is usually incorrect even in its translation – it sometimes (including how it appears in Engels' text) switches 'actual' for 'real.' This depicts a clear lack of familiarity with Hegelian philosophy, specifically, with Hegel's logic. Actuality in Hegel is the third major section in his "Logic of Essence," which is the second book of his *Science of Logic*. Actuality does not simply mean what is real, what is actual in Hegel is that which contains the "unity of essence and Existence," that is, for Hegel "what is actual is efficacious."[103] T. X. Knox provides the helpful example of a statesman: for instance, an ineffective statesman, unable to realize the duties he ought to, might be real (in the layman's sense of the word), but not actual, for he "lacks the essence" of what "statesmanship ought to be."[104] To provide an example baseball fans would understand, after a team receives a beating and is forced to put in the last innings position players to pitch, it is evident that while a position player is occupying the role of 'pitcher,' this is not an *actual* pitcher. The essence of what it means to be a pitcher is not what is manifested in existence. Reason is not present here. This is the way Hegel's statement ought to be understood. It is not a defense of political conservatism, and as Terry Pinkard notes in his *Hegel* biography, this misinterpretation (and sometimes mistranslation) was disastrous for Hegel's image, and "the consequences of [these] extend into our day."[105]

The misinterpretation of the second quote also depicts unfamiliarity with Hegel's *Philosophy of History*. When history is seen, as it is in Hegel, as the expansion of a peoples Idea of freedom, then his statement (although Eurocentric) is not as deranged. It simply means that Europe arrives (with the aid of Christianity) at the Idea that all men are free. Since there is nothing, in the realm of the Idea, beyond the universal recognition of human freedom, Europe represents the "absolute end of history."[106] Hegel divides his text accordingly to how a peoples understand freedom: 1) "the Eastern nations

---

102. Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 492.

103. G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans by A.V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1989), 529. Pinkard, *Hegel*, 458.

104. T. X. Knox, "Translator's Notes," in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, 302.

105. See especially his chapter on Hegel's time in Berlin (1818-1821). Pinkard, *Hegel*, 459.

106. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 103.

knew only that *one* is free," 2) "the Greek and Roman world only that *some* are free," and 3) the German's "that all men absolutely (man as man) are free."[107]

Engels does seem to accept some of these incorrect readings of Hegel's two statements, claiming the first is a conservative justification for the actual state of things, and the second a dissolving of the dialectical method into dogmatism. However, there is one difference between Engels' treatment of Hegel's so-called conservatism and that of other readers, namely, that for Engels the revolutionary method triumphs at the end. He says, "the conservatism of this mode of outlook is relative; its revolutionary character is absolute – the only absolute it admits."[108] Engels considers Hegel to be both justifying the existing state of affairs and its destruction, the 'actual is rational,' but still, as Mephisto said, deserves to perish. For Engels the latter triumphs over the former, reason overcomes dogmatism.

Engels' misreading, however, has infected Marxist scholarship on Hegel's political philosophy since his death. The exception in the classical Marxist cannon can be seen in G. V. Plekhanov, who saw in Hegel's *Philosophy of History* the "clearing [of] the road for materialism."[109] Even when Hegel attempts to provide an idealist historical explanation for the development of one stage of history into another, Plekhanov argues, he consistently turns to concrete economic conditions. Plekhanov states that "every time he turned to it, economics freed him from the shallows into which his idealism had led him. Economic development turned out to be the premise determining the whole course of history."[110] Engels was greatly impressed with Plekhanov's article on the 60th anniversary of Hegel's death and wrote to Kautsky saying "Plekhanov's articles are excellent," a sentiment Kautsky agreed with by saying "he is our philosopher, certainly the only one among us who studied Hegel."[111]

---

107. Ibid, 18.

108. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 12.

109. Plekhanov, "For the Sixtieth Anniversary of Hegel's Death.," 412. A few pages after he adds "It is improbable that Hegel busied himself much with political economy, but here, too, as in many other fields, his genius helped him to grasp the most characteristic and essential aspect of phenomena. Hegel understood more clearly than all economists of his time, not excepting even Ricardo, that in a society which is based on private property, the growth of wealth, on the one hand, is inevitably accompanied by the growth of poverty, on the other."

110. Ibid, 416.

111. Friedrich Engels, "Engels to Karl Kautsky," December 3, 1891. In *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol 49, 317. H. J. Steinberg (1967), Sozialismus und Deutsche Sozialdemokratie. Zur Ideologie der Partei vor dem I. Weltkrieg. Hannover: Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschehen. Latter retrieved from Kaan Kangal, *Friedrich Engels and the Dialectics of Nature*, 51.

This reading, however, did not catch much traction and the 'conservative' stain on Hegel was sustained in Marxist circles.[112]

Rational Kernel and Sublation (Returned)

In the 20th century various Marxist have argued that Engels' description of taking Hegel's method and leaving the system is unrealistic, for the method and the system in Hegel blead into one another. Louis Althusser, for instance, says that

> *It is unthinkable that the place of the dialectic in Hegel's system could be conceived as that of a kernel in a nut… [it is a fiction] that the Hegelian dialectic could cease to be Hegelian and become Marxist by a simple, miraculous 'extraction.'*[113]

Similarly, Evald Ilyenkov argues that "despite all its advantages over the old metaphysical logic," Hegel's method "cannot be adopted by materialism without a radical critique, without radical elimination of all traces of idealism."[114] However, it is often those who, like Althusser, wish to draw a wider wedge between Marxism and Hegel who lend a skeptical eye to this image. Others, like Mark Cowling – who paradoxically is a proponent of the anti-Engels crowd of the 'Engels debate' – agree with Engels and state that "there is a method which can be abstracted from Hegel's philosophy, but without necessarily bringing with it Hegel's idealism."[115]

---

112. In the recent years the prominent Marxist-Leninist Italian philosopher Domenico Losurdo breaks with this reading and postulates a revolutionary and anti-liberal Hegel in his 2004 masterpiece *Hegel and the Freedom of Moderns*. Marxist scholarship on Hegel's political philosophy has been changing along the Losurdo (and old Plekhanov) lines since, especially in the field of Chinese Marxism and its development of a Marxist human rights theory, the prominent theorist in the west for this movement has been Roland Boer. Back to Engels' reading of Hegel.

113. Louis Althusser, "Contradiction and Overdetermination," in *For Marx* (New York: Verso Books, 1979), 91.

114. Evald Ilyenkov, *Dialectics of the Abstract & the Concrete in Marx's Capital* (India: AAKAR, 2022), 83.

115. Mark Cowling, "The Dialectic in Marx and Hegel – an Outline," *Political Studies Association* 2016 Panel Papers. https://www.coursehero.com/file/64639008/MPPDialectic-in-marxian-and-hegelpdf/

It is always important to note that these are mere metaphors, aimed at painting a general idea of how things are connected. If one loses themselves overanalyzing the image, you undermine the essential point it is trying to paint. The point of Engels' division of method and system – which is a rehashed version of the kernel and shell image – is aimed at letting one know that *if* one considers Hegel's method to be his approach at analyzing the world comprehensively, in a manner which grasps interconnections, movement, contradictions and their sublation, and further sees these dynamic interconnections governed by a set of very general laws of change, applicable to nature, human history, and thinking*, then* one may say that this aspect of Hegel's philosophy is recaptured in Marxism. This is the rational kernel, or the 'revolutionary method' which Marxists inherit from Hegel.

It is this aspect of Hegel's philosophy – the dialectical method, which Lenin recognized was necessary for understanding Marx's *Capital*. He says in his 'Conspectus to Hegel's *Science of logic'* that

> *It is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!*[116]

I can only wonder how many well-meaning communist workers opened the *Science of Logic* and found it more bearable to submit to the will of capital. In all seriousness, the essential message here is not that one must have a perfect understanding of Hegel's *Science of Logic* to have a chance at grasping Marx's *Capital* – for then we are all doomed to never understanding *Capital* – but that the dialectical method traced in the categorial development of Hegel's *Science of Logic* must be understood if one wishes to have a comprehensive understanding of the categorial developments in Marx's *Capital*. The dialectical method which Marx applies to political economy in *Capital* is the same method Engels argues Marxism inherits from Hegel. This is why Lenin stresses the seminal importance of understanding Hegel, and of creating reading groups and journals like *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* who should – amongst other things – provide a "systematic study of Hegelian dialectics from a materialist standpoint."[117]

---

116. Lenin, *Collected Works Vol. 38*, 180.
117. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works Vol. 33*, 233.

While writing what we now know as the *Grundrisse*, which I have previously called a "dress rehearsal" for *Capital*, Marx sends a letter to Engels telling him he had "completely demolished the theory of profit as hitherto propounded."[118] He told him that of methodological help in doing this was his accidental reading of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. He said that

> *What was of great use to me as regards method of treatment was Hegel's Logic at which I had taken another look BY MERE ACCIDENT, Freiligrath having found and made me a present of several volumes of Hegel, originally the property of Bakunin.*[119]

The beauty of the *Grundrisse* and its unfinished character is that it shows explicitly something which is merely implicit and hidden in Marx's *Capital* – the method of work inherited from Hegel and sharpened in his 'accidental' leafing through the *Science of Logic* in 1858. This is a sentiment that Martin Nicolaus, who wrote the foreword to the first full English publication of the *Grundrisse* (1972), shares. Referring to *Capital* and the *Grundrisse* he says,

> *The inner structure is identical in the main lines to the Grundrisse, except that in the Grundrisse the structure lies on the surface, like a scaffolding, while in Capital it is built in; and this inner structure is nothing other than the materialist dialectic method. In the Grundrisse the method is visible; in Capital it is deliberately, consciously hidden, for the sake of more graphic, concrete, vivid and therefore more materialist-dialectical presentation.*[120]

Although Marx admits to having "coquetted with the modes of expression peculiar" to Hegel in *Capital*, the first to recognize the methodological similarity between Hegel's *Science of Logic* and Marx's *Capital* was Engels.[121] In an 1891 letter to Conrad Schmidt, Engels says that

---

118. Carlos L. Garrido, "Critique of the misunderstanding concerning Marx's base-superstructure spatial metaphor," *Monthly Review Online* (June 15, 2021). Karl Marx, "Marx to Engels," January 16, 1858. In *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol 40 (New York) International Publishers), 249. This dress rehearsal analogy is from Lenin, who described the 1905 revolution as a dress rehearsal for 1917 a few times in his writings.

119. Ibid.

120. Martin Nicolaus (1972), "Foreword," in Marx's *Grundrisse*, 60.

121. Marx, *Capital*, 20.

> *If you just compare the development of the commodity into capital in Marx with the development from Being to Essence in Hegel, you will get quite a good parallel for the concrete development which results from facts.*[122]

A similar connection would be seen by Lenin in his 'Conspectus to Hegel's *Shorter Logic,'* where he says that

> *If Marx did not leave behind him a "Logic" (with a capital letter), he did leave the logic of Capital, and this ought to be utilized to the full in this question. In Capital, Marx applied to a single science logic, dialectics and the theory of knowledge of materialism [three words are not needed: it is one and the same thing] which has taken everything valuable in Hegel and developed it further.*[123]

He would then, like Engels, draw a comparison between Hegel's first category (being) and Marx's (commodity) and say that the development of both proceeded from "the most simple" to the more complex. He also drew a connection between the relations of value and price, and wages and the price of labor-power, to Hegel's logic of essence and the dialectic of essence and appearance.[124]

There has since been a plethora of scholarship done on the methodological similarities between the development of the categories in Marx's *Capital* and those in Hegel's *Science of Logic* and *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Science*.[125] It is worth mentioning how this connection has been viewed in Marxist scholarship since the death of Lenin, for it is one of the central aspects of the rational kernel that is retained in the Marxist sublation of Hegel.

The most lucid parallel between Marx's three volumes of *Capital* and the three books contained in Hegel's *Encyclopedia* is expressed by Pichit

---

122. Friedrich Engels, "Engels to Conrad Schmidt," November 1, 1891. In *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol 49 (New York: International Publishers), 287.

123. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works Vol. 38*, 317.

124. Ibid, 318.

125. Recent studies on the topic include the volume edited by Fred Moseley and Tony Smith (2014), *Marx's Capital and Hegel's Logic: A Reexamination*, Brill; and Manolis Dafermos (2021), "Rethinking the relationship between Marx's Capital and Hegel's Science of Logic: The tradition of creative Soviet Marxism," *Capital & Class*. doi:10.1177/03098168211029003

Likitkijsomboon in his 1992 essay 'The Hegelian Dialectic and Marx's *Capital*.' In Hegel's *Encyclopedia*, as was expressed briefly above, the logical development of the concept arrives at the final category of the Idea, which is then externalized or realized in nature. This negation of the Idea into nature is then itself negated (negation of the negation) in the transition to spirit, where the Idea returns to itself. As Ian Hunt and Roy Swan concisely put it,

> *the Logic presents the Idea as an immediately given subject, Nature is the estrangement of the Idea from itself, or its self-objectification, and Spirit is the return of the Idea to itself from estrangement, negating Nature as such, but affirming Nature as itself.*[126]

This triadic structure of Hegel's *Encyclopedia* – immediacy (Logic), mediation (Nature), and mediated immediacy (Spirit), mirrors the three volumes of *Capital* – production as such (vol. 1), circulation (vol. 2), and capitalist production as a whole (vol. 3). Capital is in *Capital* what the Idea is in Hegel's *Encyclopedia*.

Marx makes the relationship between the three volumes of *Capital* clear in the first chapter of volume three where he says that,

> *In Book I we analysed the phenomena which constitute the process of capitalist production as such, as the immediate productive process, with no regard for any of the secondary effects of outside influences. But this immediate process of production does not exhaust the life span of capital. It is supplemented in the actual world by the process of circulation, which was the object of study in Book II. In the latter, namely in Part III, which treated the process of circulation as a medium for the process of social reproduction, it developed that the capitalist process of production taken as a whole represents a synthesis of the processes of production and circulation. Considering what this third book treats, it cannot confine itself to general reflection relative to this synthesis. On the contrary, it must locate and describe the concrete forms which grow out of the movements of capital as a whole. In their actual movement capitals*

126. Ian Hunt, Roy Swan, "A Comparison of Marxist and Hegelian Dialectical Form," *Radical Philosophy,* 30 (Spring 1982), pp. 33-40, 35.

> *confront each other in such concrete shape, for which the form of capital in the immediate process of production, just as its form in the process of circulation, appear only as special instances. The various forms of capital, as evolved in this book, thus approach step by step the form which they assume on the surface of society, in the action of different capitals upon one another, in competition, and in the ordinary consciousness of the agents of production themselves.*[127]

The categories correspondent of capital in the first volume are too 'abstract,' that is, they don't yet resemble the "form which they assume on the surface of society."[128] This abstract character of the categories in volume one is "analogous," as Pichit notes, "to Hegel's Logic, [which is] the stage of the Idea in the abstract, positing itself without any explicit presupposition of Nature or human mind."[129]

In volume two capital externalizes or realizes itself in circulation. The categories in this volume (various capital circuits, turnover of various forms of capital, etc.) are subsequently more concrete, they contain (as Marx defined in the *Grundrisse*) a greater "concentration of many determinations… a unity of the diverse" categorial developments present in volume one (commodity, money, capital, absolute and relative surplus value, etc.).[130] Finally, this is all brought together in volume three, formulating a concrete image of the whole. This volume, which gave Engels a decade of troubles to edit, is recognized by him to have "the most important parts of the entire work."[131] This last volume deals with "capital at its mature stage, capital in and for itself, as explicit and real economic relations in all spheres."[132]

Another lucid example of the homological relation between Marx's *Capital* and Hegel's *Science of Logic* is seen in the Soviet Marxist philosopher L. Mankovsky in his 1962 article "Logical categories in K. Marx's '*Capital*.' " For Mankovsky,

---

127. Karl Marx, *Capital V. III* (New York: International Publishers, 1974), 25.

128. Ibid.

129. Pichit Likitkijsomboon, "The Hegelian Dialectic and Marx's *Capital," Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 16(4) (December 1992)., pp. 405-419, 412.

130. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 101.

131. By 'entire work' he means *Capital* as a whole, the three volumes. Friedrich Engels (1894), "Preface," to *Capital Vol. III*, 1.

132. Likitkijsomboon, "The Hegelian Dialectic and Marx's *Capital"*, 413.

> *The commodity is the being of capital. The process of capitalist production is the essence of capital. The process of circulation of capital is the appearance of capital. The unity of the production process and the circulation process is the actuality of capital.*[133]

Whereas Pichit focused on drawing a relation between the three volumes of *Capital* and the three parts of Hegel's *Encyclopedia*, Mankovsky traces the three volumes of *Capital* to the central categorial developments of Hegel's logic of being and logic of essence. As Manolis Dafermos states,

> *Mankovsky proposed that ascending from the abstract to the concrete involves the movement from the being to the essence, from the essence to the appearance (phenomenon), and finally from the appearance to actuality (reality) as the unity and interpenetration of the essence and the appearance.*[134]

In so doing, Mankovsky's analysis of the homological relations between Marx and Hegel's work resembles the one Engels drew in the letter to Conrad Schmidt referenced above. Mankovsky's interpretation would be expanded and enriched by V. Vaziulin's 1968 book *The Logic of Karl Marx's Capital*.[135]

A good example of the concretization brought about by the negation of the negation in *Capital* volume three can be found in the treatment of price and rate of profit as sublated forms of volume one's analysis of value and rate of surplus value.[136] This development has led critics hostile of Marxism and ignorant of the dialectical method to claim this transition demonstrates an incoherence in Marx's project. These critics are incorrect; as Allen Wood notes, "volume 1 and volume 3 do not give us incompatible theories of prices, but only different

---

133. Mankovsky L (1962) Logical categories in K. Marx's 'Capital,' *Scientific Notes of the Moscow State Pedagogical Institute V.I. Lenin* **179**: 1–318. Retrieved from: Dafermos, Manolis. "Rethinking the Relationship between Marx's Capital and Hegel's Science of Logic: The Tradition of Creative Soviet Marxism." *Capital & Class* 46, no. 1 (March 2022): 77–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/03098168211029003,9.

134. Ibid.

135. Ibid, 10.

136. A further development of this connection would stray too far away from the purpose of this section.

models of commodity exchange, one more basic and abstract, the other more complex and closer to surface phenomena."[137]

If one is to speak about the Marxist sublation of Hegel, then one must include within what is preserved the drive towards greater concreteness, that is, the search for a dynamic and systematic knowledge of totalities which methodologically incorporates within it the logical and historical development of the determinations it contains. This, as has been briefly shown, is one reason for the parallel structure of Marx's tracing out of capital throughout the three volumes of *Capital*, and Hegel's tracing out of the Idea throughout the three books of the *Encyclopedia*. Of course, some (Nicolaus, Althusser) argue that we cannot compare the starting point of a commodity with that of being, for the former is already infinitely more concrete than the latter. While this may be true, the fact that Marx's abstract point of departure is more concrete than Hegel's purely abstract category of being does not change the fact that the movement in both is towards concreteness. The difference in starting point is merely the result of 1) the inversion of Hegel, that is, of the fact that one is dealing with a materialist, and not an idealist, dialectical method and 2) it is also a difference rooted in the fact that the object of study that they are ascending to the concrete to in their respective texts are different, in *Capital* it is the capitalist mode of production, in the *Logic* it is the concept and its concretization throughout history. It is only natural that as a materialist dialectic, one studying the dominant mode of production, Marx's point of departure would already be tenfold times as concrete as Hegel's in his *Logic*. The treatment of both commodities and being nonetheless ensure in each case – because of their abstract character – a contradiction which is temporarily resolved by a new category; for the commodity this new category is money, for being it is determinate being.

Before we conclude, it is important to note a problem which muddies the waters with regards to the 'dialectical laws' Marx and Engels claim Hegel discovered, and which they appropriate without a mystical wrapping. The problem is the following – Hegel never lays down any 'dialectical laws.' What Marx and Engels end up referring to as dialectical laws - the transformation of quantity into quality and vice-versa, the interpenetration or unity and struggle of opposites (law of contradiction), and the negation of the negation – are merely categories (amongst many more) that Hegel's concept goes through in

137. Allen Wood, *Karl Marx*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 224.

the logic.[138] For instance, quantity/quality are categories introduced at the end of the 'Logic of Being;' the interpenetration (sometimes referred to as the unity and struggle) of opposites is derived from the 'Logic of Essence,' specifically the chapter on "The Essentialities or Determinations of Reflection," where the categories of identity, difference, opposition, and contradiction are introduced; and the negation of the negation is introduced at the very beginning of the 'Logic of Being,' sometimes referred to as the negation of the negation, other times merely as sublation (*aufhebung*).

Why Engels and Marx refer to these as 'laws' over other Hegelian categories they use (e.g., force/manifestation, coincidence/necessity, causality/reciprocity, shine/essence, part/whole, nodal point, etc.) is unclear. Similarly, why some of Hegel's categories are fully discarded is also left unexamined. Further, Marx and Engels are ready to discard the idea that the categorial development in Hegel's logic has a necessary logical sequence. As Engels says in a letter to Conrad Schmidt, "the transitions from one category or from one contradiction to the next are nearly always arbitrary."[139]

In his 2020 text *Friedrich Engels and the Dialectics of Nature,* Kaan Kangal draws attention to the difficulties presented by this vague appropriation of Hegelian categories. He says,

> *Engels is not concerned with such Logic-internal distinctions; he ignores them. This makes it difficult to locate the precise reference points of his categories in the Hegelian context, which brings about a further difficulty in figuring out the adopted and/or transformed meaning of these categories in Engels' usage.*[140]

Although Kangal is correct about the confusion this lack of clarity brings about, in Engels' defense (which is something Kangal splendidly notes), he is not trying to provide, in this largely unfinished work, anything like a systematic depiction of the Marxist dialectics. The goal of *Dialectics of Nature* is not to provide a clear framework concerning what is kept and how from the Hegelian dialectic.

---

138. These are the three presented in Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, 63.

139. Friedrich Engels, "Engels to Conrad Schmidt," November 1, 1891. In *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol 49, 286.

140. Kangal, *Friedrich Engels and the Dialectics of Nature*, 134.

However, I do think it is fair to say that the law of the unity and interpenetration of opposites – which is in Hegel the law of contradiction – is always directly present in the unfolding of the concept in Hegel. All categories in Hegel encounter an immanently derived contradiction, which subsequently forces its own overcoming through the development of a new category. One could say that in every 'movement' of the logic contradiction and sublation (negation of the negation) are present. Further, the dialectical transition from quantity to quality and back is itself another way of formulating sublation or the negation of the negation. What is a categorial sublation in Hegel's Logic if not a qualitative leap from one category to another, mediated by an immanently emerging contradiction which arises out of the continuous tarrying (quantitative accumulation) with a concept? Is it not fair to say, then, that if these three categories, or sets of categories, can be found in every movement of Hegel's logic, they duly deserve the qualification of law?

If Marx and Engels are able to point out – as they do – the presence of these laws in nature, human history, and thinking, then they certainly deserve to be called the most general laws of universal interconnection.

Conclusion

As I hope to have shown, the three images Marx and Engels use to describe their relationship with the Hegelian dialectic – inversion, rational kernel, sublation – are all compatible. However, out of the three it is the last one – sublation – which more fully describes the relation. This is simply because to sublate includes within it what is arrived at with the previous two images, and hence, it contains a greater explanatory power than the former two alone. To say that Marxism sublates Hegel is simultaneously to say that the mystical shell which keeps dialectics upside down is discarded, and the rational kernel kept and expanded.

2

Imperialism, Multipolarity, and the International Communist Movement

Christopher Helali[1]

The world is on the verge of a third world war. The ongoing genocide in Gaza, the brutal assault on Lebanon, and the US-EU-NATO imperialist war on Russia have destabilized the world, bringing it ever closer to nuclear confrontation, and ultimately, annihilation. Mirroring this geopolitical crisis is the ongoing struggle and split in the international communist movement over Russia's Special Military Operation, the role of China, the genocide in Gaza, the support for anti-imperialist nations (including Venezuela and Iran), and the emergence of a multipolar world. Ideologically led by the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), mostly Western parties have interpreted the current geopolitical landscape as a rivalry between imperialist powers. This so-called theory of "inter-imperialist wars" confuses the masses, attempting to take a dogmatic and unscientific approach under the banner of "neither Washington, nor Moscow,

1. Christopher Helali is the International Secretary of the American Communist Party.

nor Beijing." However, it is clear that international developments have revealed that a new, more progressive world order is on the horizon.

In *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin outlines the main economic aspects of imperialism. It is important to identify them so that they help make informed ideological positions about our contemporary situation. This is ultimately the scientific outlook that we must stress. The five main economic traits of imperialism are as follows:

1. The concentration of production and capital reach heights that give rise to monopolies, which play a decisive and outsized role in economic life.
2. The fusion of banking and industrial capital gives rise to finance capital and the financial oligarchy.
3. The export of capital, unlike the export of goods, acquires special importance.
4. International monopoly groups are formed that divide up the world among themselves.
5. The world is divided and distributed among the major capitalist powers.[2]

We must then juxtapose this definition with the so-called illustration of the "imperialist pyramid" that was presented by the former General Secretary of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), Aleka Papariga. She writes,

> *Today there are few countries which are at the summit, in the first positions of the international imperialist system (it is illustrated with the schema of a pyramid in order to show the various levels occupied by the capitalist countries) a handful of countries one could say according to the Leninist expression. But this does not mean that all the other capitalist countries are victims of the powerful capitalist states, that the bourgeois class of most countries has submitted to the pressure, despite its general interest that it has been corrupted. It does not mean that the struggle of the peoples must be directed against Germany in Europe while in the American continent it must have a direction merely against the US. It is*

2. V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,* https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/ch07.htm.

> *not a coincidence that the opportunists in Greece present Brazil and Argentina as positive examples for the overcoming of the crisis, that they extol the policy of Obama. Their persistence in denying the existence of the imperialist pyramid namely the existence of international imperialist system (talking about a very small number of countries which can be characterized imperialist mainly due to their hegemonic position and their ability to decide on the launching of a local or general war) is not at all accidental or a product of a mistaken view but conscious. Their willingness to undertake responsibilities in a bourgeois government to manage the crisis arises from this.*[3]

This definition seeks to expand Lenin's definition of imperialism, conflating it with merely having a capitalist mode of production or, in the case of socialist countries, having any economic relations with a capitalist country.

> *The number of states is increasing which are regional powers, satellites of strong imperialist powers, countries which play a particular role in the alliance and partnership policy of the various powers in the pyramid. The inter-imperialist contradictions are in effect in every form of alliance, and all these multi-facetted relations, which embrace every capitalist country in the world without exception, constitute the imperialist pyramid.*[4]

The KKE is effectively saying that every country in the world is a constitutive part of the imperialist pyramid. While it is clear that some powers are greater imperialist powers according to the pyramid, every country in the pyramid is to a greater or lesser extent, imperialist. No exception is made for those countries which are socialist or those that are fighting against Western hegemony. Aleka Papariga says, "Today the number of imperialist centres has increased, while new forms of alliance have also emerged such as the alliance centred on Russia, the alliance of Shanghai, the alliance of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS), the alliance of the countries of Latin America ALBA, MERCOSUR etc." This idea that somehow all of these countries are

---

3. Aleka Papariga, "On Imperialism-The Imperialist Pyramid," https://inter.kke.gr/en/articles/On-Imperialism-The-Imperialist-Pyramid/.

4. International Relations Section of the CC of the KKE, "The Leninist approach of the KKE on imperialism and imperialist pyramid," https://inter.kke.gr/en/articles/The-Leninist-approach-of-the-KKE-on-imperialism-and-imperialist-pyramid/.

imperialist compared to the USA and the European Union, even economically speaking, is categorically wrong.

From the ziggurats of Mesopotamia to the Egyptian and Mesoamerican pyramids, these structures have long symbolized hierarchies of power and authority. For over a century, pyramids have been a feature of revolutionary art and literature. Early uses include the caricature of the capitalist system entitled "Pyramid of Capitalist System" published by the Industrial Workers of the World. These classic images show the working and toiling masses holding up an entire structure that has different levels which say "we eat for you," "we shoot at you," "we fool you," and "we rule you." However, it is clear that the pyramid's base supports the top in a way which is not voluntary but imposed. The Marxist economist Paul Baran writes about the capitalist pyramid in his classic book, *The Political Economy of Growth*. In it he writes,

> *The momentous movement to do away with the entire edifice of imperialism, to put an end to the backwardness and prostration of the overwhelming majority of the human race, would by itself have created considerable consternation in the ruling class of the United States and other capitalist countries sitting on top of the imperialist pyramid. What has transformed this consternation into a state of near-panic, however, is the historic confluence of the restiveness in the underdeveloped countries with the spectacular advance and expansion of the world's socialist camp. The military performance of the Soviet Union during the war and the rapid recovery of its war-ravaged economy provided the final proof of the strength and viability of a socialist society. There can no longer remain any doubt that a socio-economic system based on comprehensive economic planning can function, grow, and withstand the most trying historical tests - without the benefits of private enterprise and without the institution of private property in the means of production. What is more, a large number of dependent countries went through a social revolution after the war, and thus entered the road to rapid economic and social progress. Eastern and Southeastern Europe, and even more importantly China, dropped out of the orbit of world capitalism and became sources of encouragement and inspiration to all other colonial and dependent countries.*[5]

5. Paul A. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth,* (New York: Penguin Books, 1962), 117-118.

Baran's use of imperialist pyramid here is quite different than that presented by the KKE. Here, the imperialist pyramid is a pyramid that has at its peak the United States and other capitalist countries. However, beyond the pyramid's boundaries are the socialist countries which have "dropped out of the orbit of world capitalism." However, the KKE does not acknowledge this. In fact, as Joti Brar of the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist Leninist) notes, "according to the theory of the 'pyramid', every country that engages in trade, from Great Britain and France to Cuba and the DPRK, is guilty of imperialism – the various states of the world simply occupying different levels on the great global 'pyramid' of imperialism."[6] This is because, according to Brar, the KKE "bases itself on the incorrect assertion that *every economy in which trade takes place and commodities are produced is a capitalist economy*."[7] Thus, "According to this travesty of Marxism, the contradictions between the various countries are all 'interimperialist', to be explained by their competing imperialist interests and the desire to displace one another from the top of the 'pyramid' of world imperialism. Such a definition, we should note, includes within its scope even the Soviet Union of J.V. Stalin's time."[8] To conclude, Brar notes that the KKE's so-called "Leninist" pyramid is actually a reinvention of Trotskyism.

Regarding China in particular, the Communist Party of Greece is clear about China's position in the imperialist pyramid. Makis Papadopoulos, a member of the Central Committee of KKE and the one responsible for the Ideology Department, was quoted in an interview saying, "the Chinese economy is motivated from the capitalistic profits and not from the social needs. China, today, bears the characteristics of a strong state of monopoly capitalism, a creditor state and a leading force in the imperialist pyramid."[9] This completely rejects the tremendous success China has had in eradicating extreme poverty and developing an economy that serves the needs of people rather than profit.

---

6. Joti Brar, "How the KKE uses Marxist terminology to cover its retreat from Marxism," *The Communist,* October 1, 2023, https://thecommunists.org/2023/10/01/news/theory/how-kke-uses-marxist-terminology-cover-retreat-from-marxism-war-opportunism/. For another theoretical rejection of the imperialist pyramid see, Gabriel Gonçalves Martinez, "The Leninist Theory of Imperialism and Misconceptions of the 'Imperialist Pyramid' Theory," *Hampton Institute*, (February 29, 2024), https://www.hamptonthink.org/read/the-leninist-theory-of-imperialism-and-the-misconceptions-of-the-imperialist-pyramid-theory.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. International Communist Press, "The communists need to struggle decisively and methodologically against imperialism," (June 1, 2016), https://icp.sol.org.tr/interviews/communists-need-struggle-decisively-and-methodologically-againts-imperialism.

Sadly, the ongoing domestic crisis in Greece surrounding the Chinese ownership/management of the port of Piraeus has led the KKE down a path of Sinophobia and chauvinism.

The only correct view regarding imperialism today is to see the United States, European Union, and the NATO alliance, including their allies and lackeys (Zionist entity, Morocco, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand, etc.) as constituting one imperialist axis. Combined, they represent the real unipolar, hegemonic, and imperialist power in the world today. However, this power is declining. The rise of BRICS, the SCO, BRI, and other politico-economic projects seeks to challenge the decades long unipolar world order. This is the birth of a multipolar world and it is the duty of every anti-imperialist to stand against US-EU-NATO imperialism.

A true Marxist-Leninist perspective on the emerging multipolar world should be centered on the progressive nature of this new world order. The American Communist Party does not see multipolarity as the solution itself but as a progressive and strategic step for the peoples of the world to have more freedom than under the unipolar world of US-EU-NATO hegemony. It is this freedom and space that will allow social movements to thrive and develop new economic forms as we are already seeing in different countries around the world. The American Communist Party rejects the theory of the so-called "imperialist pyramid" and sees this as an attempt to obfuscate the theory of imperialism. The American Communist Party recognizes the progressive role played by Russia, China, DPRK, Iran, Yemen, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba, and other socialist and anti-imperialist countries in the world today.

The American Communist Party, true to the historical legacy of Marxism-Leninism, understands the importance of uniting forces that are dedicated to anti-imperialism. Our historical duty is to unceasingly confront US-EU-NATO imperialism and all of its proxies around the world. This represents the greatest threat to humanity today. Given the various fronts and lines of demarcation facing the international communist and workers' movement today, we must sharpen our ideological positions and prepare for a prolonged ideological war with those who choose revisionism, opportunism, and factionalism. Our strategy is to be united in confronting imperialism under the banner of anti-imperialism. Today, the World Anti-Imperialist Platform is greatest force capable of uniting the forces of anti-imperialism. We must heighten and deepen our collective struggle against the US-EU-NATO

imperialist axis, the greatest threat to world peace. Only through the final confrontation with Euro-Atlantic imperialism can we open the possibility of constructing socialism-communism and building a lasting world peace for all.

3

Snakes in the Grass: The Fake Left, the 2024 Elections and Identity Politics

Danny Shaw[1]

The following article brings together several chapters from Danny Shaw's forthcoming book Social Death: The Fake Left, Identity Politics and Cancel Culture.

As the 2024 presidential elections approach, should we — the vast majority, the 99 percent, the working-class voters — be more concerned with who is the lesser of two evils or who is the more effective of two evils? Do we want to solidify the genocide in Gaza, the decimation of the Middle East and the Western capitalist-imperialist project or hasten its demise? This article addresses how the Democrats remain politically hegemonic and use wokeness

---

1. Danny Shaw is a Professor of Latin American Studies at various City University New York institutions. He is a Director of the International Department of the Midwestern Marx Institute and a member of the American Communist Party Political Bureau, where he serves in the International and Educational Departments. He is the author of *This is Genocide! (2024)*.

in similar ways to the purportedly anti-establishment "movement left" to shore up anti-class politics and reproduce the status quo. It is the conclusion of Red America that both parties of the dictatorship of capital are dangerous but that the Democratic Party represents the more effective danger.

This essay will then show how certain segments of the left have adopted the snake-in-the-grass politics of the Democrats, relying on hollow virtue-signaling, or identity politics and cancel culture, as our lives as workers plummet more every day. The NGO left, or the fake or compatible left — toeing the line of the liberals who exercise political and ideological hegemony in the West — promotes a brand of anti-dialectical identity politics blurring the line between the left and the liberals. Only a determined return to a class politics that can unite us instead of dividing us along the myriad lines of identity is a winning strategy for all of us who have been denied our slice of the American dream.

Snakes in the Grass

Italian historian Domenico Losurdo's *Liberalism: A Counter-History* makes the argument that liberalism has long been the ruling class's preferred ideology. Liberalism provides cover for brutal, colonial content with a glossy, "democratic," enlightened form. As one year plus of the Gaza genocide now expands into the West Bank and Lebanon, Haaretz and CNN can still publish headlines where they are the good guys, and the native Arabs are the despotic "terrorists." Liberalism allows the capitalist elite to devour markets, resources and surplus labor across the globe, all in the name of "human rights" and "humanitarianism." In *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, Frederick Engels cites Henri de Saint-Simon, the early French utopian socialist who "points out how everywhere [under capitalism] the most pitiful reality corresponds with the most most high-sounding phrases."[2] Social critic Chris Hedges examines the case of Libya and Western "humanitarian imperialism."[3] The colonial West invoked the R2P, Right to Protect, to justify their bombing, dismemberment and recolonization of what was at the time of the 2011 War on Libya the richest country in Africa. Though Losurdo stops his study at World War I, there are

2. Robert Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader. 2nd Edition*. "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific." London: WW Norton and Company. 1978.

3. Chris Hedges, "Humanitarian Imperialism Created the Libyan Nightmare." *Sheerpost*. September 17, 2023

chapters yet to be written about liberalism as the preferred ideology of the imperialists a century later. Syria, Nicaragua, Russia and beyond are in the crosshairs of woke imperialism. In fact, every sovereign or semi-sovereign state fights an everyday battle against ever-intensifying imperialist encroachment. The woke agenda has become part and parcel of the cultural and ideological machinery of imperialism. It is but one front in hybrid wars waged on Global South states and their quest for true independence.

Liberalism allows the snakes in the grass to present themselves as polished and civilized. The Trump-supporting conservative today, while generally a dedicated mouthpiece of capitalism and imperialism, is characteristically not as refined and says what they really think. It is enough to remember Prime Minister Emmanuel Macron welcoming the U.S. "back as a cooperative leader of the free world" when Joe Biden was inaugurated president in 2020.[4] The capitalist class always prefers bourgeois democracy, that is the semblance of democracy, to any form of proto-fascism which reveals its true nature. The sleek Barack Obama was the perfect antidote to the graceless George Bush Junior. I was in Western Africa in Cape Verde at the time Obama won and it felt like all of Africa was pregnant with hope that at last the United States had moved beyond imperialism because the son of a Kenyan was president. How wrong they were then. And how wrong identity politics is now. On Tuesday November 4th 2008, Barack Obama won the elections, and overnight our anti-war marches for Iraq and Afghanistan went from having millions involved across the country to hundreds. In Obama, the ruling class had found their antidote to class politics – identity politics. As Professor Christian Parenti and journalist Chris Hedges have shown us "Wokeness Kills Class Politics and Empowers Empire."[5]

Kamala the Fox

The essence of liberalism is to project the appearance of real change while ensuring that power remains concentrated in the same corporate elite hands. Liberalism is close-minded and non-dialectical at its core because it seeks to

4. *CNBC*. "America is back with Biden, France's Macron says." June 12 2021
5. The Chris Hedges YouTube Channel (Sep 25, 2024) "Wokeness Kills Class Politics and Empowers Empire (w/ Christian Parenti)" https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=xTpeQ4V-YeY&t=116s

preserve the present order. It is the fox Malcolm X warned us about who still "ends up with the lambchop on his plate."[6] Malcolm went on to explain who liberals are at their core: "The Negro community is controlled by the white liberal who usually poses as the friend of the negro, who actually differs from the white conservative in the same way that the fox differs from the wolf.[7] Their appetite is the same. Their motives are the same. It is only their mannerisms and methods that differ."

Kamala Harris is representative of the foxes the Democratic Party establishment parades out in front of its faithful. Harris showed moral outrage during the September 10th presidential debate when Trump accused Haitians and other immigrants of streaming across the border and "eating dogs and cats." What ABC and the rest of the legacy media ignored is the fact that as Trump spouts his customary ignorant xenophobia, the Biden-Harris administration is invading and occupying Haiti for the fourth time in the past century. Trump Derangement Syndrome is everywhere, preventing Democratic voters from seeing that Biden's health has dramatically deteriorated since he first assumed office.[8] The liberals can't sleep at night because of how "disgusting" they see Trump as being, and indeed he, his worldview and politics are anti-worker. Meanwhile, the Democratic administration in power is paying the neoliberal Kenyan government of William Ruto $333 million dollars to send mercenaries to invade, occupy and keep Haiti subjugated as a neocolony, because they could not get U.S. public opinion behind another invasion using U.S. boots on the ground.[9] This is but one example of how shallow, liberal moral outrage often masks far more dastardly and sophisticated crimes.

As political analyst Dr. Wilmer Leon discussed on his weekly show "Connecting the Dots," the Democrats specialize in " opportunistic outrage and morality." The liberal obsesses over and warns of Project 2025 as Project 2023 and 2024, aka Project Genocide, intensifies, as does the censorship and repression in the West to justify the forever wars against Palestine, the Middle East, China, Russia and any other country that does not cower before U.S. unipolar domination. Meanwhile at home, one in four of us does not have

---

6. Simply Explained. (Jul 10, 2017). "Malcolm X: White Liberal is a fox in the Fox-Wolf Analogy." YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHzNFQXTUOQ

7. ibid.

8. Multon House.gov. "You Need to Stop Saying Joe Biden has Dementia." March 12, 2020

9. Jennifer Hansler and Tara John, *CNN*. "US will contribute $300 million to Haiti's multinational security mission." March 11, 2024

work.[10] Our children and siblings are dying of overdoses at the highest rates humanity has ever seen.[11] Inflation, artificial intelligence and automation continue to bulldoze over working class lives, sparking a strike by the 50,000-member-strong International Longshoremen's Association.[12]

High-and-Mighty Hillary's Disdain for Workers

Let's return to Hillary Clinton's infamous "basket of deplorables" quote from the 2016 presidential campaign. At one of her fundraisers in New York City, where plates of food sold for $33,000, Clinton told us how she feels about tens of millions of Americans:[13] *CT Post*. August 9, 2016.

> *"You know, to just be grossly generalistic, you could put half of Trump's supporters into what I call the basket of deplorables. Right? The racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamaphobic—you name it. And unfortunately there are people like that. And he [Trump] has lifted them up."*

The butcher of Libya and coup-monger of Honduras, and promotor of other foreign coups, has a right to sermonize us?

A faithful supporter of genocide, aka a Zionist, lectures us on Islamophobia?

Hillary Clinton thinks she is better than you and me. At Georgetown and Yale and throughout their careers, the Clintons mingled with the Bushes, Trumps and other ruling class figures.[14] *Vanity Fair*. July 14, 2017. Liberals lecture about freeing Tibet, Hong Kong and Taiwan but what have they done for Houston, Cincinnati, and Brockton? "Freedom" in the (neo)liberal sense is the freedom of foxes to roam among chickens. All of the fancy, "globalist" (to use the Trumpian term, Marxists say imperialism) dogma seeks to "free" up any

---

10. *The Ludwig Institute for Shared Economic Prosperity*. "True Rate of Unemployment." 2024. https://www.lisep.org/tru
11. *Center for Disease Control*. "National Center for Health Statistics." September 11, 2024.
12. *US Inflation Calculator. "Current Inflation Rates." October 16, 2024. https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/inflation/current-inflation-rates/.*
13. Neil Vigdor, "$33K per plate for dinner with Hillary Clinton in Greenwich."
14. Hilary Weaver, "George W. Bush and Bill Clinton's Friendship Now Feels Shocking."

corner of the globe from Zimbabwe, to Bolivia to Vietnam, for further capitalist penetration.

What a disdainful view this career politician has of millions of our class peers.

Trump, a showman and hustler of the oligarchical sort, along with his advisors who are not far behind, are ingenious to call her "Crooked Hillary." "Swamp," "deep state," and "Sleepy Joe" are sly, populist slang words that cut to the heart of liberal hypocrisy. No wonder my cousins talk about Trump like he is coming to their cul-de-sac in rural Manchester, New Hampshire to drink with them this weekend. He is their hero because he says what they feel. The problem is that this false prophet has tapped into their sincere anti-establishmentarianism with more racism, homophobia, xenophobia and misogyny designed to scapegoat and divide.

Sociology 101 teaches us that we are merely social creatures shaped by our social environment. No baby emerged from the womb saying "We're gonna put watchtowers on the border with Mexico and put the mafia in them to shoot the Mexican illegals." But this is exactly what we hear in Ohio and Indiana, and in "Trump Country" New York and Massachusetts. It is predictable. Study the means of communication. An uncritical populace consumes the media which manufactures consent. The nicest family man on earth sees his exploited neighbors to the south as "migrants" and "cockroaches," as threats and as their enemy. Trump, the dog whistler, knows exactly what he is doing, and Democrats bring him tens of millions of voters on a tray.

Are the liberal-left, coastal elites just going to abandon "Trump Country" to our class enemies? Have we forgotten how to speak to our neighbors, teammates and coworkers and how to organize them through local struggles? Carlos Garrido's book *The Purity Fetish and the Crisis of Western Marxism* was what first attracted this lifetime "leftist" to head (mid) west. I put the term "left" in quotations at various points of this essay because I no longer recognize certain parts or expressions of it. Garrido quips: "For these Marxists the traditional communist slogan is no longer "workers and oppressed people of the world unite," it is "socially enlightened workers and oppressed people of the world unite."[15] He cites Lenin who reminds us: "one can and must begin to build socialism, not with abstract human material, or with human material specially

15. Carlos Garrido, *The Purity Fetish and the Crisis of Western Marxism* (Dubuque: Midwestern Marx Publishing Press, 2023).

prepared by us, but with the human material bequeathed to us by capitalism."[16] The cancel culture left has disgraced itself in the eyes of the masses of workers. If we cannot find common cause to organize with our "deplorable" sisters and brothers, why call ourselves Marxists? Calling ourselves charlatans, dilettantes and Clintonites would be more accurate.

There is a psychology chestnut or proverb that comes into play here; all obnoxiousness is a cry for help. Poor white people have as little control over the mainstream media, educational curriculum, family apparatus and religious institutions as do working-class black and brown people.

There are 12 LGBTQ billionaries in the world. There are 17 black billionaires in the world, mostly from Nigeria and the United States.[17] There are 369 women billionaires in the world, almost all from the West or the colonizing countries.[18] There are no poor white billionaires.

Trump is our enemy. "Trump Country" is not.

Trump the Wolf

Trump's hateful rhetoric is not for liberals nor for us, the highly politically-literate, critical readers of this journal, , but rather it is for his base. Trump uses his billions to speak from a pulpit of class privilege to his voters, who are largely down-and-out, high-school-educated, working-class whites, and easy prey for his divisive, anti-worker scapegoating and conspiracy theories. Instead of correctly analyzing these class contradictions, liberalism in both its bourgeois and left iterations, has turned its back on the post-industrial working-class. "Trump Country" as the Midwest and other "deplorable" places are now often referred to, is nothing more than the inevitable product of neoliberal arrogance and economic neglect. These class contradictions, in both their bourgeois and petit-bourgeois manifestations, are partly what called the American Communist Party (ACP) into existence in June of 2024. The rejects,

16. Vladimir Lenin, *Collective Works*. Vol. 31, 50.

17. Dedrick Asante-Muhammad and Eddie Gray. The Racial Wealth Divide and Black Billionaires Across the Globe. *National Community Reinvestment Coalition.* November 14, 2023.

18. Samantha Kroontje, "The Richest Women In The World 2024." *Forbes*. April 2nd 2024.

castaways and “deplorables” of liberalism and leftism demand their day in the sun too.[19]

While *Red America* rejects the demagoguery and anti-poor worldview of the MAGA movement, on October 1st vice-presidential hopeful J.D. Vance said what has never been said on CBS news, a network owned by the billionaire, zionist Redstone family (originally the Rothsteins).[20] Vance questioned Russiagate, the Democratic Party’s handling of COVID and the big-tech censorship that has stunted the active thinking of America. His opponent, Governor Tim Walz of Minnesota, a mouthpiece of liberalism who has paid his dues to rise up in the ranks, had no response to these points.

Liberals feel most comfortable wading in surface-level or symbolic politics, afraid to go deeper, less they inconvenience their consciences and lives. The more privileged classes will never see what is behind a Biden or Harris because it would impact their interests. How do we reach everyday Americans when they have been so thoroughly conditioned to think a certain way? The shadowbans, demonetization and algorithmic censorship around us tightens every day to make sure liberals and conservatives remain right where they are. It was [21] the U.S. company Oracle and the House of Representatives that suspended hundreds of thousands of TikTok accounts for political content that was not favorable to empire.[22] Any account today that critiques the U.S.-NATO proxy war against Russia and its geopolitical interests is being taken off social media. @DD_Geopolitics is one of the latest victims.[23]

Though they hide behind their woke appearance, the Democratic Party today is the party of war and censorship. The GOP is by no means any less guilty, but

---

19. *Revolutionary Blackout Network* (Sep 4, 2024). “MAGA Turns On Donald Trump After INSANE Zionist Interview. CNN Revives Russiagate! w/Danny Shaw.” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhzhOn-4J64&t=1025s

20. Scott Feinberg, ”Shari Redstone Emotionally Speaks About Israel, Antisemitism and Racism at Gathering of Jewish and Black Hollywood Power Players.” *The Hollywood Reporter*. October 18, 2023.

21. Edward Liger Smith, Carlos L. Garrido, and Noah Khrachvik. ”The US Censors Dissenting Voices: On the Attacks Against the Midwestern Marx Institute,” *Midwestern Marx. Accessed May 31, 2023. https://www.midwesternmarx.com/articles/the-us-censors-dissenting-voices-on-the-attacks-against-the-midwestern-marx-institute-by-edward-liger-smith-carlos-l-garrido-and-noah-khrachvik.*

22. Laura Ceci, ”Number of TikTok accounts removed from the platform from 3rd quarter 2020 to 1st quarter 2024, by reason,” *Statista* Jul 15, 2024.

23. @dd-geopolitics (September 23 2024). Our YouTube channel was unjustly ripped away today under the pathetic pretext of 'repeated violations of community guidelines'https://x.com/DD_Geopolitics/status/1838228623465312609

this article addresses a fundamental question: are the Republicans as effective? This is not a personal slight against the millions of Americans who identify as liberals or conservatives, who are indeed the vast majority of us. These everyday "liberals" and conservatives," including my family members, are good human beings on a personal level but are severely misinformed. Malcolm X reminded us: "Don't be in a hurry to condemn [someone] because he doesn't do what you do or think as you think or as fast. There was a time when you didn't know what you know today."

The More Effective Evil

This analysis is what led the late Executive Editor of *Black Agenda Repor*t, Glen Ford, to call Obama not the lesser of two evils, but "the more effective of two evils."[24] Ford wrote:

> *"No matter how much evil Barack Obama actually accomplished during his presidency, people who call themselves leftists insist on dubbing him the Lesser Evil. Not only is Obama not given proper credit for out-evil-ing George Bush, domestically and internationally, but the First Black President is awarded positive grades for his intentions versus the presumed intentions of Republicans. This is psycho-babble, not analysis. No real Left would engage in it."*

The liberal is ensnared by individual oppression and loses sight of the big, anti-capitalist picture. They insist that we have no choice and "must vote for Kamala or you're a fascist." Without nuance and a dialectical understanding, liberal analysis ignores the creeping fascism that surrounds us everywhere.

Liberalism relies on the political mouthpieces they themselves have groomed. Trump is a clumsy, untrained loose cannon. In fact, this is his appeal. At times, he tells it exactly like it is. Trump told the world what we all knew but had never heard from the centers of power themselves: the war on Venezuela is nothing more than another war for oil.[25] Imagine if other presidents told the

---

24. Glen Ford, "Why Barack Obama is the More Effective Evil," *Black Agenda Report* March 21 2012.

25. @Acyn. X. (June 10 2023) "Trump: When I left, Venezuela was ready to collapse. We would have taken it over, we would have gotten all that oil." https://x.com/Acyn/status/1667682589333659648.

truth in such a fashion? What impressionable young patriot would ever sign up for the U.S. military? The truth would throw into question the legitimacy of the entire system. Well-known and censored social media personality and organic intellectual Eddie Liger Smith explores the difference between Trump and a more polished, bewitching Obama who waged war on Honduras, Libya, Syria and beyond, but always claimed to do so in the name of democracy.[26] Precisely because the national wrestling champion Smith and others of his generation reached millions with an anti-NATO and anti-genocide message, the ruling class has censored them.

Trump disobeyed the cardinal rules of bourgeois democracy and questioned the results and legitimacy of the system in 2020, throwing the entire system into crisis. His refusal to peacefully and diplomatically pass on power as the Obamas had done in 2017, when Trump and his wife Melania moved into the White House, is an example of how he is "unpresidential" from an elite perspective. Homelessness, unemployment and budget cuts are fair game for the capitalists, as are genocides, invasions and the squandering of hundreds of billions on foreign aggression. But being a sore loser and not accepting the results of the elections are a grave transgression. That is why both Walz and Vance have received strict instructions to pretend to be civil and nice to each other. Trump's intransigence inspired the January 6th storming of Congress which as clumsy as it was could be analyzed as a type of coup attempt, albeit a pathetic one. Fox News declared Biden the winner in 2020 before any of the liberal outlets did.[27] The ruling class was solidly united behind Biden, as the "Weekend-at-Bernie's" puppet zombie they needed.[28]

Trump marches to the beat of his own transactional drum. He pursues his own interests. The U.S.-NATO Proxy War on Russia is the heart and soul of the Biden-Harris White House's foreign policy. The Kiel Institute for the World Economy tracks the total amount of military support the EU countries and the U.S. have sent to Ukraine which sits at about $100 billion dollars.[29] Imagine Trump, with his bloated ego and opportunistic nature, daring to declare that he will end this proxy war on Russia before he is even elected president again. The

---

26. @Edwardmliger. Tiktok. (September 17). https://www.tiktok.com/@edwardmliger/video/7415726793908407583?_r=1&_t=8pt9zMgDR2E.
27. Nate Cohn, "Why Fox's Call on Arizona, Which Was Right, Was Still Wrong." *New York Times*. March 25, 2023.
28. Ted Kotcheff and Klane, Robert. "Weekend at Bernie's." July 5 1989.
29. *Kiel Institution For The World Economy*. "Ukraine Support Tracker." June 30 2024

two assassination attempts on his life have to be analyzed in this context. In fact the second would-be assassin admitted that "the Ukraine War," that is the liberals' propagandized version of the U.S.-NATO-Ukrainian ruling class war on Russia, motivated him to try to take out Trump. Trump would prefer to build 10 of his own hotels in Pyongyang and Moscow rather than see these handsome profits squandered in the coffers of the Military Industrial Complex. It is not that Trump is in any way morally superior to any other candidate, but rather that his style objectively clashes with the needs of the ruling class who are accustomed to grooming their own hand-selected politicians. This analysis has to be balanced with Trump's threats against women reproductive rights, to deport masses of immigrants and to use the military to repress leftist protestors. Though Trump has a penchant for such bombastic statements and is often bluffing, every "minority" in the U.S. has a right to feel under the gun if Trump again wins the presidency.

America's number one addiction is "The American Dream." From an internationalist perspective, this mentality and ideology is called "American Exceptionalism." To think that a Barack Obama or Kamala Harris became the CEO's of the U.S. empire through simple hard work is the illusion the liberals feed us. Trump did not pay his dues and genuflect before the real power structure. Though a sleazy, real-estate mogul born with a silver spoon in his mouth, Trump did not work his way up through the traditional political circles. An economic insider, he became a political outsider. An economic swamp monster, he dared challenge the unchallengeable, the political swamp. His boldness and appearance of integrity calling out the fake, opportunist politicians struck a chord across working-class America. The actor and conman, elevated by self-interested TV networks, opportunistically usurped the voice of the common American and his life-long resentments against the ruling elites like Hillary and Bill Clinton. How can those whose life savings are roughly 500,000 times less than Trump, see in Trump their savior?[30] (I arrived at this math by dividing Trump's net worth, roughly $4,000,000,000 dollars by the median amount of savings American families have in their bank accounts which is $8,000.) Do any of us honestly think that Trump, Governor Burgum of North Dakota or Governor Pritzker of Illinois would ever sit down with us and actually feel any concern for our American problems?[31] For so many of our

30. Joyce Bertilson, "Key Statistics on Average Savings Account Balances," *Market Watch* September 6 2024.

31. Visual Capitalist, "Charted: The Richest Politicians in the U.S.," December 9, 2023, https://www.visualcapitalist.com/richest-politicians-in-the-u-s/.

class to embrace filthy rich billionaires, imagine how much we must hate the traditional politicians.

Trump is not a true leader; he is a huckster. A true leader, like Fidel Castro, Rafael Correa or Joseph Stalin, would have been there, no matter how right or wrong they were, in the trenches on January 6th. Trump sent his followers off to battle and went to play golf.

The Abandonment of the Working Class

The liberal left has abandoned so many of us to the detriment of class unity.

The pro-NAFTA, highly educated liberal intelligentsia mocked and canceled the poor whites of Appalachia and the opioid addicts of Fitchburg, MA, resulting in the MAGA insurrection among "the deplorables" that the liberal establishment now excoriates. Though I am 100 percent east coast, I identified with the rest of the castaways and threw my lot in with the deplorables of the Midwest and the rest of the U.S. This was what brought me (mid)west to the Midwestern Marx Institute and eventually even more midwest to the American Communist Party. Large swaths of the left throw away the baby with the bathwater, ignoring the popular, anti-capitalist rage contained within the MAGA base.[32] It is into this void that the ACP seeks to strategically place itself to absorb this righteous anger and channel it against the system. While we could never embrace MAGA politics, we refuse to condemn and turn our backs on MAGA's base, millions of Americans who thrive for economic equality and justice.

General Secretary of the American Communist Party Haz Al-Din explains he and anti-imperialist social media influencer Jackson Hinkle's creative success in outsmarting algorithms and reaching everyday workers who identify as MAGA: "We have a saying, as MAGA communists, which is that when you go to McDonald's, you don't go for the clown, you go for the burger. Trump is the mascot of the movement."[33] Their approach, which reached tens of millions, mostly through Hinkle's twitter account which has 2.8 million followers, was designed to be offensive to liberals and their woke world views so as to win

32. Convergence Magazine. *YouTube*. "Marx over MAGA: The Socialist Left in the Fight Against MAGA. Oct 16, 2024. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3HziF580Ek

33. The Guardian, "What is MAGA Communism?," May 24, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/may/24/what-is-maga-communism.

over MAGA loyalists who were stuck in the cultural war but reject the liberal elites. Tongue in cheek and flippant, the duo even chided that mouthpieces of the woke left should be "deported." Where else can we "deplorables" turn, if the woke left thinks they are better than us? Both founders of the ACP, they pushed back against the spectrum of liberal leftists who they felt were playing right into the hands of the Scapegoater and Demagogue in Chief.

The American Communist Party aspires to replace the Misguider-in-Chief who has effectively cashed in on the social alienation that so many working-class voters feel. Because Trump and his pro-billionaire politics cannot concretely resolve any of our people's needs or demands, in 2028 or whenever, the pendulum will swing back to the liberal wing of the ruling class who will then cash in on Trump's failures. How do we get our people off the merry-go-round of the two parties of capital? Keenly aware of the dead-end nature of both wings of the ruling class, we seek to reroute the popular frustrations and rage towards an effective struggle to bury liberalism, capitalism and all its billionaires once and for all.

The Left-Liberal Slippery Slope and its Slovens

It is important that we understand our number one enemy through and through. It is the opinion of Red America that both Trump and Kamala are bad for the working man and woman of the United States, but that liberalism is our greatest threat because it lulls us deeper to sleep. The wolf remains outside of our circles, distant and recognizable, but the fox is crafty and able to infiltrate in beguiling ways. This essay will now concern itself with what happens when this devious enemy and its ideological expressions have seeped into "the movement." As a 30-year veteran of "the left," I no longer recognize a movement I helped build beginning in the 1990's. Nonprofits, Gender Identity Politics and cancel culture are three 21st century pillars of a new liberalism that is eating the left from within.

Never did I think the day would arrive when the left had more in common with the Kamalas and Hillaries and turned its back on the average working man and woman. This is what fuels the right-wing media's ability to pigeonhole and manipulate the movement. Despite the offensive nature of the comments, it is important to understand the perception of millions of American workers who

now see the left as "nothing more than blue-haired, matcha-latte drinking college students and privileged bubble boys who want to be women."[34] ACP Secretary of Education Carlos Garrido takes on the need for an authentic change in our organizing culture in *Why We Need American Marxism*, a must read for anyone in "the movement" who knows our salvation does not lie in Havana but in Harlan County, Kentucky and not in Caracas but in Cleveland, Ohio. How we wrest this movement back from the identity-obsessed, nonprofit foundations and alien liberal cancel culture is a question American Marxists can no longer delay.

The Trillion Dollar Nonprofit Noose

Fredrik DeBoer's *How Elites Ate the Social Justice Movement* takes on the burning question of "why so much of the political energy in this country gets diverted into affective and symbolic issues."[35] The former University of Rhode Island student organizer offers an overview of the George Floyd and Occupy organizing moments which mobilized millions but effected few if any real changes. DeBoer's new book addresses why "then, very little happened." DeBoer's thesis is that "elite capture" wrested control over our movement.

His fourth chapter "The Non-Profit Industrial Complex" (NPIC) builds on a necessary read *The Revolution will not be Funded*.[36] DeBoer dissects the deleterious effect that nonprofits have on organizing. Nonprofits grew out of the deregulation of the 1970's and Reaganomics of the 1980's which gutted the public sector. There are five main points the social critic raises:

1) Nonprofits siphon off revolutionary talent and channel it in a reformist direction. In the author's words, "It's the nature of nonprofits to take radicals and make them bureaucrats."

2) Quoting the National Association of Nonprofit Organizations and Executives, the author reminds us that "a successful nonprofit knows that their #1 Customer

34. This is what I have heard from many truck drivers, used car salesmen and other workers. The quotes are directly from them and from conversations we have had.

35. Frederick Deboer, "*How Elites Ate the Social Justice Movement.* New York: Simon and Schuster." 2023.

36. INCITE! *Women of Color Against Violence. The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*. Duke University Press: 2017.

is their donors, period." An adverse class oversees our social prerogatives, budgets and tactics. If we speak up too loudly about serving the people, we risk our jobs and grants.

3) A high, undisclosed percentage of money goes to the maintenance and bureaucracy of an estimated 1.5 million nonprofits. A lower percentage of donations actually reach the "targets" or "shareholders," to use nonprofit doublespeak.

4) As the nonprofit Common Dreams explains, or admits, "the purpose of the nonprofit sector writ large is not to solve social problems—it is to perpetuate them." If the grant writers, Board of Directors or Executive Directors were to admit a problem was solved, though this is materially impossible under capitalism, how would they continue to justify the financing of their jobs? It is in their interest to only superficially address the opioid pandemic,[37] the random shootings crisis[38] or domestic violence.[39] These problems are intrinsic to capitalism. Band-aid liberal solutions do not touch the underlying causes of social crisis. This is by definition.

5) Nonprofits exist as tax havens for the rich, not as genuine instruments of working-class power. The women-owned executive search firm Battalia Winston asserts that 87 percent of nonprofit execs were white as of 2017. "Whiteness" is not just a racial measure in the United States; it is also a class measure. The bourgeoisie has captured the nonprofit world. There are more "member-led" grassroots groups who are ignored by the foundations precisely because they pursue social objectives independent of the NPIC.

The $1 Trillion NGO Republic

As of 2019, the Urban Institute's National Center for Charitable Statistics documented 1.5 million nonprofits in the U.S. registered with the Internal Revenue Services (IRS). These nonprofits spent a combined $1 trillion dollars, which DeBoer calculates as 5.5 percent of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product.

---

37. Daniel Shaw, "50 years since the Panthers formed, Capitalism + Drugs still = Genocide" *MIDWESTERN MARX INSTITUTE* July 9 2023.

38. Daniel Shaw, "Murder Thy Neighbor: A Recap of Mass Shootings in 2023" *Journal of American Socialist Studies* 3 (2023/2024).

39. Daniel Shaw, "To Live Among Broken Men: Theorizing Rape and Incest," *Hampton Institute* July 26 2016.

The Non-Profit Industrial Complex employs more Americans "in terms of wages than finance, retail and food service."[40] Beginning circa 1973, neoliberalism reduced the number of unionized jobs, displaced many of the social services and other work done by this sector and rolled back, took back and cut back the safety net of welfare capitalism. The result was the proliferation of the non-profit sector which became the main site for social services and community organizing. This replaced a proud proletarian history of independent organizing, such as the Communist Party of the United States of America (the CPUSA) in the 1930's and the Black Panthers and Rainbow Coalition of the late 60's.

Parenti exposes the Professional Managerial Class (PMC) "tasked with managing a hierarchy, and protected by new [woke] armor in a Hobbsian war of all against all for posts and material incentives."[41] As organizers, are we aware of the disproportionate influence these professional activists have, backed by astronomical amounts of money? Contrast this with the resources that we have as everyday working-class volunteers. The liberal wing of the establishment uses their PMC agents to set agendas and priorities, and most importantly keep us divided into subcultures at war with one another.

The organizer and author DeBoer distrusts this "activist culture." In balanced writing, overly fair to liberals, showing some of his own liberalism (he was published by Simon and Schuster after all), he denounces that "expressions are often the ends themselves. Canceling, or making critiques or accusations with the intent of provoking widespread personal and professional shunning, is an example of where the political action stops at the level of expression. 'MeTooing' proved to be perhaps the most powerful version of canceling, and individual targets have had their public personae effectively vaporized."[42] For Harvey Weinstein and R. Kelly this makes sense. What about everyday men who knew patriarchy but never knew Hollywood? Did losing their jobs, social media or reputation help them transcend their mistakes? Are people traumatized from living in this dehumanizing society acting out their traumas on people who look like their enemies? How can comrades and fellow travelers

---

40. Frederick Deboer, *How Elites Ate the Social Justice Movement* (New York: Simon and Schuster. 2023).

41. The Chris Hedges YouTube Channel (Sep 25, 2024) "Wokeness Kills Class Politics and Empowers Empire (w/ Christian Parenti)" https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=xTpeQ4V-YeY&t=116s

42. Frederick Deboer, *How Elites Ate the Social Justice Movement* (New York: Simon and Schuster. 2023).

be held accountable without forgetting that they are human? Who is measuring this? Nonprofits who receive money according to their "Transformative Justice" (TJ) and "Restorative Justice" (RJ) results?

Is the point to isolate us into more acting out or to grow in community? Cancel culture isolates and atomizes; Marxist dialectical culture creates community and a way back.

Noah Khrachvik, Organizing Director of the Midwestern Marx Institute (MMI), levels the same criticisms against what he calls "the activist brain." The Cleveland-based carpenter and Marxist theorist and teacher challenges the students of the Institute, posing necessary questions: Are we seeking to please the hundreds of us in online or in-person organizing circles or win over the tens of millions who do not know about, much less relate to, these small circles? Khrachvik calls them out in a forthcoming piece from the Journal of American Social Sciences called "Against the Fake Left." Many at the MMI, Infrared and the joint project of the ACP consider themselves as refugees, rejects and survivors of the left, more than traditional activists.[43]. It was precisely the liberal-left slope evaluated here that pushed us away. When we sought to work with the established left, they dismissed us as "Pat Socs" and "Nazbols." In doing so, this fake, petty bourgeois left has shown their aversion to dialectics and their absolute disdain for us and everyday, humble Americans seeking to survive, fight back and win.

It is interesting to note that U.S. capitalist hegemony exercises the same strategy globally. If New York City and Los Angeles, as command posts of neoliberalism, are Republics of Nonprofits, how has the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) converted countries like Haiti and Ukraine into Republics of Western NGOs? The Foreign Policy Establishment, through mouthpieces like CNN and the New York Times, attacked Vladimir Putin as anti-democratic, anti-gay and anti-women. The most undemocratic institution in the history of humanity — the U.S. Military Industrial Complex — determines who is a dictator and who is a democrat? Woke politics keeps the flow of our tax dollars into the war

43. Revolutionary Blackout. (September 4 2024). "MAGA Turns On Donald Trump After INSANE Zionist Interview. CNN Revives Russiagate! w/Danny Shaw." https://www.youtube.com/live/mhzhOn-4J64

chests. By learning about international struggles, we can more easily recognize the tentacles that suffocate us at home.[44]

The term “deep state” is understood to be a MAGA term. DeBoer asks, is this phalanx of nonprofits not an example of “the deep state?” From a Marxist view, the term deep state is redundant. The state are specially armed bodies of men tasked with protecting and reproducing property relations. Whether “deep” or highly public, whether armed with guns, batons or endless deep, nonprofit pockets, the state exists to keep us in our place. While it is easier to see the police’s role, can we see how nonprofits and NGOs form part of the ruling state machinery? What anti-establishment roles can well-intentioned “lefties” play within nonprofits that have a base of oppressed people in neglected communities? Perhaps we should ask the 171 million people of Bangladesh where the U.S. government-funded “International Republican Institute trained an army of activists including rappers and LGBTQI people, even hosting transgender dance performances, to achieve a national ‘power shift.’ ”[45]

“I Mistrust Sex Theories”

The German revolutionary leader Clara Zetkin sat down in Lenin’s study in the Kremlin to discuss women’s liberation in 1920.[46] *The Emancipation of Women: From the Writings of V.I. Lenin.* International Publishers. There is a reason the bourgeoisie spends so much time maligning and spreading misinformation about Lenin, the definitive leader of the Russian Revolution. The mentor of Trotsky, Stalin and two generations of Bolsheviks was crystal clear on questions of sex and sexual identity in the communist movement: “I mistrust sex theories expounded in articles, treatises, pamphlets, etc. in short, the theories dealt with in that specific literature which sprouts so luxuriantly on the dung heap of bourgeois society. I mistrust those who are always absorbed in the sex problems, the way an Indian saint is absorbed in the contemplation of his navel.”

---

44. Johnston, Jak. Aid State: Elite Panic, Disaster Capitalism, and the Battle to Control Haiti. January 30 2023

45. Kit Klarenberg and Wyatt Reed. ”Leaked files expose covert US government plot to 'destabilize Bangladesh’s politics.'" *Greyzone*. September 30, 2024.

46. Clara Zetkin, ”Lenin on the Women’s Question.”

What is the leader of arguably the most important event of the 20th century, the Russian Revolution, telling us? Stay focused on the class struggle. The gender-obsessed cottage industry of nonprofits, like that of "white privilege," is by design. It divides us. It castrates the unity and strength of the movement. It directs all the attention towards identity politics and away from class struggle.

As CPUSA leaders Claudia Jones and William Foster, and Comintern leader Georgi Dimitrov and so many others lay out, "Marxist-Leninists fight to free woman of household drudgery, they fight to win equality for women in all spheres; they recognize that one cannot adequately deal with the woman question or win women for progressive participation unless one takes up the special problems, needs and aspirations of women – as women."[47] Red America is not critiquing honest attempts to defend proletarian women and their class interests but rather liberal outsiders who use this rhetoric to divide our class along identity fault lines. Women and the queer community have every right to justice, in every realm of their lives. And queer activists are not all "man haters," as the right alleges. But the question stands for some who have not done their own healing but are on the front lines of "healing" others: does hating, punishing and isolating men or whites or any relatively socially-privileged group of our class bring women and the LGBTQ community justice? Who is the main enemy? Why are we attacking other people who are victims and organic opponents of the same system? What makes the entire "gay community" a community? A shared sexual orientation towards the same sex unites gay billionaires with gay homeless people? Giving up on any of our people is not an option. We sink together or we rise together. Which do you choose?

Now you know why the PMC hates Lenin. He was the chief theoretical force behind the emergence of millions of human beings from desperate prehistory into the realm of freedom. The PMC doesn't want liberation; they want pronouns, promotions and profits. Pats on the back and more grants from important white, liberal donors are the PMC's "revolution." Toeing the line, these nonprofits that come out of the movement against police brutality (which became known as Black Lives Matter in 2014) and the queer movement are unthinking, proponents of Washington counter-revolutions from Kiev to Managua. This does not take away from the rank and file of member-led

47. Claudia Jones, *Viewpoint Magazine*. "We Seek Full Equality for Women." February 21, 2015.

nonprofits who fight the system with everything they have; the critique is of the well-paid PMC agents who misguide the members.

Divide et Impera

Censored and fired doctor, Ranjeet Brar, puts the Gender Identity Politics phenomenon into the colonial continuum of capitalist ploys to divide and conquer the toiling classes.[48]. The labor organizer and his party The Communist Party of Great Britain sees these manifestations of Gender Identity Politics as "ultra-individualism" which "plays such a disorganising and reactionary role." For courageous ideological and organizational stances, Brar and his party have endured attacks from all quarters on the slippery slope of the liberal left.

The term Gender Identity Politics refers to the liberal mainstream media's obsession today with pronouns, "gender identity" and the entire edifice that has become known as the "Trans movement." While this is a principled critique of the liberal capturing of "the left," it is important to recognize how women, gay and trans comrades stood up to confront the racism, sexism and homophobia that plagued the movement itself. This analysis is not anti-people; it is anti-systemic.

It is of no concern to the communist, what any individual does with their body. What is of concern to the communist are petit-bourgeois theories and fads, what the right often calls "the transgender or activist agenda," that infiltrate the thinking and everyday lives of our class. Today, how many "left" or "movement" spaces are in fact anti-working-class?

The very same legacy news cycle that ignores labor struggles whips up hysteria about setbacks and advances for different subsets of the gay community. A school curriculum that ignores the truth about U.S. foreign policy now has special focus on what they frame as our ability or right to change our genders. This is not an attack on any individual and their personal expression which is everyone's inalienable right. It is a sociological evaluation which seeks to unearth the sources of the divisions and backbiting that characterize the left

48. Transgender Trend, "Transgender Trend Resource for Schools," accessed October 7, 2024, https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3.cpgb-ml.org/TransgenderTrend_read.pdf

today. This new phase of gender politics is a priority of liberalism. It has a definitive ideological function. Making this connection does not seek to deny anybody their sexual freedom, but rather contextualize this new social phenomena.

Parenti reminds us that the Founding Fathers were the original proponents of Identity Politics.[49] In the Federalist Papers No. 10, James Madison replies to the ruling class fear that the constitution was over-empowering the dispossessed masses who made the 1776 American Revolution (for more on the protagonist of our ancestors see Herbert Aptheker's *The American Revolution 1763-1783*). A proponent of *divide et impera* (divide and conquer), the slave owner and aristocrat Madison had a surefire way to keep the propertyless from coming together to fight. He sought to divide the biggest faction, the have-nots, into subgroups or "factions" in order to obscure who the enemy is. The factionalism parachuted down between the rural and urban, black and white and different trades were the identity politics of that era.

In 1890, Frederick Engels wrote: "According to the materialistic conception of history, the production and reproduction of real life constitutes *in the last instance* the determining factor of history." What this means is the bourgeoisie consistently does everything in its power to reproduce social relations under its continuing control. Engels and Marx understood that every social phenomenon was perfectly explicable because they were rooted in the ruling class's domination of its rival class, the working class. Translated to 2024, nothing around is coincidental. Think of any social phenomenon — alcoholism, gangs, segregation, high-school, dropout rates, single parent homes or any others. Taken as isolated facts, they are difficult to understand. But as we unpack what factors caused them to inevitably occur, we shed light on the dialectical reality that what can be done, can also be undone. Nothing is inevitable. Nothing is eternal.

The elites through mass media and social media have set workers and society against one another over secondary and tertiary contradictions. One worker hates another because one side sees the other as "transphobes" and the other hollers back "Go get a job you lazy, America-hating hippie liberals." Lost in algorithm-fueled aggression are the central questions that plague society, mainly that eight individual billionaires now possess more wealth than half the

49. The Chris Hedges YouTube Channel (Sep 25, 2024) "Wokeness Kills Class Politics and Empowers Empire (w/ Christian Parenti)"

planet.[50] What appears to so many in the left of New York City or Los Angeles to be a life-and-death issue is the best of distractions from the issue leading to all of our annihilation, a small clique of billionaires who are burning the planet to the ground.

Canceled by the PMC

PMC is a term that writers Barbara and John Ehrenreich coined in 1977 in an essay for *Radical America*.[51] They were searching for a term to describe "activists" or "salaried mental workers" who came from privilege and had managerial ambitions. *Dissent* author Alex Press defines the "Professional-managerial class" (PMC), as technocratic liberals, or wealthier Democratic primary voters, or the median Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) member." POC stands for "People of Color." Black and brown communities or oppressed nationalities are another way of saying POC. We communists seek to unite all workers to fight against the common enemy while not denying for a second the history of white supremacy and xenophobia in the U.S. Is the goal to unite workers or further fragment them? Do the white and POC PMC seek liberty for all or chairs closer to the capitalist masters' table?

The communists don't want to cancel the MAGA workers conditioned to be racists from birth; we seek to cancel and rebuild the society that creates them. Chris Hedges' article "Cancel Culture, Where Liberalism Goes to Die" makes the point that over 50 percent of the protestors who attacked the capital on January 6th were in desperate financial straits. His point is that within that multitude, there are good people who want to fight the very enemy with whom this very essay is concerned. But our people do not know how. Do we have the luxury of turning our backs on this complex and stratified group of people and scoffing at them as CNN and the Washington Post have done every day since January 6th 2021, and long before?

We should study cancel culture empirically. What impact have all the movement suspensions, expulsions and cancellations had? Have comrades from more stable class backgrounds been subjected to cancel campaigns? Who

50. Aimee Picchi, "Meet the 8 men who are wealthier than half the globe." *CBS News*. January 17, 2017.

51. Radical America. Brown University. "The Professional Managerial Class." 1977.

has bounced back and rejoined the left? Who went a different direction in life feeling like they left behind a cult? What are the racial, gender and class dynamics of cancel culture? Who is canceling who? Have comrades come back stronger, more sensitive and more committed, meaning as better revolutionaries? Because if that is not our goal, what is?

Is it even their goal?

PMC "leaders" want to maintain top-down, corporate organizational structures, opposed to collective, critical thinking. To reference my own personal experiences, I have repeatedly received letters and commands isolating and suspending me from the movement since 1996. They read like they were written by the Human Resources departments of a Fortune 500 company. And indeed, they have been. 95% of Fortune 500 companies now invest in lawyers and Human Resource and Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI) infrastructure to avoid expensive lawsuits over discrimination. The merger of capitalism and hollow DEI initiatives is what gave birth to Ibram X. Kendi and Boston University's Center for Anti-Racist Research.[52] The liberal establishment poured tens of millions of dollars into such projects as tens of thousands of families down the street in Dorchester and Roxbury live below the poverty line. This well-trained cadre of experts are able to become millionaires, as long as their concern remains with "etiquette and aesthetics," to again cite Parenti.

In a legal sense, their attitudes and "official" correspondence smack of bourgeois contractualism. The PMC agents are more concerned with walking a tightrope around legality than building an actual unifying movement. People can now be kicked out of small Palestine solidarity organizing groups if they make someone else feel "uncomfortable." Liberal bullying of others ensures that the bureaucrats stay on top. Identity politics and abstract talk about "structures of power" which focus exclusively on race, gender and sexual orientation is a convenient way to deflect from liberals' own class origins and interests. Identity Politics is their petit bourgeois shield to make sure they never have to give up their own sinecures and access to power.

This offers the Non-Profit Industrial Complex many "victories" to stand on. These are "victories" that include the disposing of revolutionaries, "victories"

52. Associated Press, "Ibram Kendi's Center for Antiracist Research Lays Off Almost Half Its Staff," September 15, 2023.

that keep the NGO complex going because it funds their machinery and "victories" that fragment our movement.

True dialectical leadership and dialogue potentially exposes an organization's shortcomings, forcing a new understanding, a resynthesizing or an ascension to a new concrete.[53] A true reckoning with the class dynamics of cancel cultures forces all of us to grow but liberal wreckers and cancellers only seek to grow their egos, power and savings accounts.

Cancel Culture: Appearance versus Reality

Anarchist AK Press's *Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement* reads as an authoritative work on community strategies to keep everyone safe. It is nearly impossible to find anything objectionable in the eloquent words of the dozens of contributors and practitioners of this work. There is no intention of taking anything away from honest individuals who work with these collectives. In anticipation of the critics, trapped in their own "safe spaces" and liberal silos, who may refuse to engage with this work, no conclusions are ever black or white, that is cut or dry. They are dialectical. Even in the most well-funded liberal bastions of identity politics, there are kernels of truth. For example, no Marxist could deny that there is a history of hate crimes and murders of people because their sexual orientation is not the dominant societal one. Nor could we deny that there is a history of sexism that has hurt social movements. Discipline is a must; cancel culture is petit bourgeois.

For Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha the editors of *Beyond Survival*, the easy part is filling the pages with beautiful words and concepts; the challenging part is how to apply it in real time and real life. My own experiences and research confirm how some of the organizations and individuals who put this anthology together betrayed their very own creeds. Regardless, of my prefaces and disclaimers these liberal forces will continue to dox, bully and cancel us. They have to. That is their job under neoliberal capitalism. In fact, they already have. Too many times to count. Now, how can they accuse the accused, dox the doxed, or cancel the canceled? Most of us

53. Carlos L Garrido, "The Dialectical Ascension from the Abstract to the Concrete." *Midwestern Marx Institute*. 7/28/2022.

who have these critiques have already been threatened and marginalized and are on the outside of the movement. What do we have to lose at this point?

In a chapter entitled “Beyond Firing: How do we Create Community Accountability for Sexual Harassment in our Movements,” Amanda Aguilar Shank offers the compelling, feel-good-story of Francisco. Francisco worked at *Voz Hispana* (Hispanic Voice). He had a track record of stalking, intimidating and forcing himself onto women colleagues. Dozens of women avoided him while many others fell victim to his aggression.

Aguilar Shank walks the reader through the process of isolating Francisco from the movement. Francisco was a veteran of the Salvadoran resistance to the 1980’s U.S. Wars of Aggression against Central America. In his combat experience, the former FMLN guerrilla saw murders and massacres perpetrated by U.S.-trained and funded Contras.[54]. He had flashbacks of military intelligence officer Major Roberto D'Aubuisson and the other CIA-trained torturers who murdered an estimated 50,000 Salvadoreans to ensure that El Salvador remained part of the U.S.’s neocolonial backyard. In Franscisco’s case, we can observe a basic law of psychology, trauma and capitalism. The terrorized terrorize their comrades. The traumatized traumatize their coworkers. The denigrated denigrate their colleagues.

Ultimately, according to Aguilar Shank, Francisco did the work, was rehabilitated and rejoined the movement, making amends for the damage he caused. This was a tremendous tale. How motivating that someone misogynistic, sick and suffering had reinvented himself. There was only one problem with this happy-ending story. It did not line up with the reality of “the movement.” I have no way of confirming or debunking Aguilar Shank’s account and in theory her account deserves much praise. It was the right way to deal with an abuser and survivor like Francisco. However, neither myself nor any of the other survivors of cancel culture I work with knew of this particular case. The happy-ending blueprints *Beyond Survival* lays out is not how so many of us have experienced these nonprofits and their cancel culture. We have rarely seen these types of successful results in the world of “transformative justice.” We have a liberal left before us where TJ and RJ are preached by many and practiced by few. In dozens upon dozens of cases I’ve experienced or

54. Gregory Weeks, ”The Military and Politics in Postauthoritarian Chile,”*Human Rights Review* 4, no. 3 (April 2003): 12–28, accessed October 1, 2024, https://pages.charlotte.edu/gregory-weeks/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2012/04/WeeksG_2003HRRarticle.pdf

observed, the PMC's preferred weapons are isolation and whispering campaigns. None of this is considered by Dixon and Piepzna-Samarasinha, two pop stars of the nonprofit industry.

While the fairytales of woke triumphs dominate their worldview, it is foolhardy for revolutionaries to ignore the reality on the ground. The triumph of wokeism sounds the death knell of Marxism. "The left" has become obsessed with finding purity in their ideology and methods. This was exactly what the ruling class foresaw and adapted to. Liberal foundations have armed and funded sections of "the movement" to do their dirty work for them.

``The Progressives'' and their Distorted Sense of Progress

Malcolm made it plain yet again: "I will never say progress is being made. If you stick a knife in my back 9 inches and pull it out 6 inches, there's no progress. If you pull it all the way out, that's not progress. The progress is healing the wound that the blow made. And they won't even admit the knife is there." This quote applies to all our struggles from Gaza to Greensboro, Beirut to Asheville. The reformist left has led us astray.

Parenti's work outlines the exploiting class's many underhanded moves to subvert the growth of class consciousness.[55] He begins with the post-WWII Taft-Hartley Law which banned solidarity strikes when unions wanted to stand with one another, the Congress of Industrial Organizations's (CIO) purging of Marxists and the Smith Act which enabled the government to hunt down communists as criminals. After undermining class politics, they swooped in with foundations to build a compatible left. Karen Ferguson's *Top Down: The Ford Foundation, Black Power, and the Reinvention of Racial Liberalism* tracks "the white liberal effort to reforge a national consensus on race which had the effect of remaking racial liberalism from the top down—a domestication of black power ideology that still flourishes in current racial

55. Class Unity, "Christian Parenti: Wokeness and Class Struggle," YouTube video, 1:14:24, posted by Class Unity, June 27, 2023, "The Cargo Cult of Woke," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ap4PARqsq_k&t=158s. "One thing that is linked to this whole woke triumph over the left is the decline when we say the decline of class consciousness..."

politics."[56] The $16-billion Ford Foundation built its own "black movement" which was a cheap mimicry of Malcolm's fledgling Organization of Afro-American Unity and the Black Panther Party for Self Defense.[57] The owning class's entire focus was on race, black Nationalism and the co-optation of leadership and discourse to elevate divisive, race politics over class politics.

The former German parliamentary leader of the social democratic party Die Linke (The Left), Sahra Wagenknecht wrote the book *The Self-Righteous: My counterprogram – for Social Cohesion and the Public Good*. She critiques the German left who she sees as having abandoned workers to live in their own holier-than-thou, pharisaic bubbles.[58] She sees the two key features of "left-liberals" as "having extreme intolerance towards anyone who does not share their view of things and fighting for quotas and diversity, i.e. for the unequal treatment of different groups." She quotes a summer 2020 letter by 153 intellectuals from different countries, including Noam Chomsky and J. K. Rowling: "The free exchange of information and ideas … is becoming more restricted by the day. While we expect this from the radical right, an atmosphere of censorship is also spreading in our culture." With concern they see "Intolerance of dissent, public denunciation and ostracism and the tendency to turn complex political issues into moral certainties. We are paying a high price, in that writers, artists and journalists no longer risk saying anything because they fear for their livelihoods as soon as they deviate from the consensus and do not howl with the wolves."[59]

As promised prominently on their website, the Sparkplug foundation[60] which has total assets of $7.07 million awards grants to "Black, Indigenous, People of Color, people with disabilities, women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, transgender, queer and other queer-identifying communities, organizations or organizers."[61] What unites everyone of these identity-based groups? They focus on specific tiny, ever-fragmented and shrinking demographics. The Sparkplug foundation embraces every shade of gender identity and sexual orientation and rejects every communist. Follow the money and we can learn to

---

56. Karen Ferguson, *Top Down The Ford Foundation, Black Power, and the Reinvention of Racial Liberalism*: University of Pennsylvania Press Politics and Culture in Modern America. June 2013.
57. *Ford Foundation*. "How We Make Grants".
58. Editors. *Labour Affairs*. *"Sahra Wagenknecht—The Self-Righteous."* December 2021.
59. Editors. *Labour Affairs*. *"Sahra Wagenknecht—The Self-Righteous."* December 2021.
60. *Sparkplugfoundation. https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/331033952*
61. Propublica. *Sparkplugfoundation.* July 2003

what extent the state has its hand in the cookie jar of the merry-go-round of sectarian protests across the U.S. Having marched hundreds of times with every expression of the left for three decades, I do not speak from a place of bitterness, but rather one of recognizing the class character of "our movement" today.[62] To not do so, would be a disservice to the only struggle we can all be loyal to, the class struggle. Only along class lines can we unite the struggle to free everyone who is oppressed because of their race, sex or sexual orientation. Identity politics diverts us into liberal deadends. Class politics are the mighty tidal waves of internationalism the Bolsheviks of 1804 and the Haitians of 1917 rode all the way to power.[63]

Different groups in the movement to stop the genocide in Palestine are at war with one another. If anyone raises questions about disunity in a time of genocide, they are shut down. The irony is that almost all of these groups receive money from foundations that push a divisive, anti-dialectical agenda.[64]

Who would have thought that censorship, intolerance and repression would end up flowing from the woke liberal mobs and their social media shock troops? "A left" conditioned to think of the MAGA base or "the right" as the enemy cannot see the anti-proletarian, anti-dialectical hogwash in our midst because it masquerades as "progressive." Every day the holocaust in Gaza progresses, while they consider themselves more "progressive."

``We Don't Believe in Isolation, Just Don't Come Around Us or the Movement''[65]

The above quote captures how the liberal left talks left but walks right.

The gurus themselves Adrienne Maree Brown, Ejeris Dixon and others are but a few of the superstars of the LGBTQ non-profit movement.[66] It is a must to follow the money to locate what class forces support their stardom. If *Beyond Survival's* approach is truly part of dismantling this system, why would so

62. I often put "the left" or "our movement" in quotes so as to continue to pose the question, who really controls this movement?

63. I switched the dates of their victories in the spirit of internationalism.

64. NGO Monitor, "Palestinian Youth Movement," October 7, 2024.

65. I pieced together different quotes from the canceling parties.

66. @adriennemareebrown https://www.instagram.com/adriennemareebrown/?hl=en

many liberal foundations embrace it so wholeheartedly? What is missing is class analysis.

This impassioned, 10-chapter collaboration serves as a manual of sorts but where are the testimonies of those charged with harm who came out on the other end as better comrades? Who was not banished into spiritual Siberia, forever judged as a bad person? One of the most important things we can lead with as Marxists is that we never give up on our people. No matter how down and out and traumatized one may be there is a way forward.

Brown themself speaks for many of us when they critique the call-out culture many of us have succumbed to and participate in. Who can deny the dopamine hit from seeing a high-profile "as*h*ole" get outed in front of the world? They ask if it is "transformative justice when we are throwing knives and insults, exposing each other's worst mistakes, reducing each other to moments of failure." Those who consider the words of the PMC hypocritical are correct. It is this author's contention that through a dialectical lens there are kernels of truth we can rescue from these petit bourgeois politics.

Brown's provocative question, "Is it possible we will call each other out until there's no one left beside us?" reminded me of the poetic reflection inspired by the anti-Nazi, German, Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller: "First They Came:"

First they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Communist
Then they came for the Socialists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Socialist
Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a trade unionist
Then they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Jew
Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out for me

While a comparison to the Nazi war machine is overblown, the question persists: Where is the woke left leading us?

First they came to cancel the white comrades
because they were taking up too much space.
Then they came to cancel the men
because they made us uncomfortable.
Then they came to cancel those over 35
because they were using the wrong words.
Next we came to cancel the heterosexual people
because they could not relate to our terminally-unique oppression.
Then we canceled ourselves
and there was no one left to speak for us.

Marxists Never Give Up On the Masses: Towards Dialectical Justice

Isolation or Social Death is not how we will treat our sisters and brothers in the class struggle. We will not give up on our fellow Americans and class sisters and brothers because of the hegemony of the Democrats and their left-liberal allies.

At this juncture, “Restorative Justice” and “Transformative Justice” are empty buzzwords and paradigms that have been thoroughly maligned and hijacked by the nonprofit world. These cliches have been used to purge the working-class movement of the poor and the impure. Objective necessity demands a new approach.

Dialectical Justice creates space for conflict and contradictions to exist without encouraging us to vilify, exclude and cancel one another. It admits that organizing the schools of communism Lenin helped theorize and build will necessarily involve finite steps back to take infinite steps forward. I use the term “Dialectical Justice” to differentiate the Marxist or class-struggle approach to ensuring there is justice, discipline and equality in our organizing ranks. While Dialectical Justice will surely never be a Department of Education or academic buzzword, it captures the spirit of the collective healing process a

truly revolutionary movement deserves. What unites these other groups who have got it wrong is the class reality that petit bourgeois politics were in command. We can do better when our parties and organizations are not infiltrated and dominated by class interests alien to our own.

Why are the liberals only interested in identities and feelings? Because that is where they can hide. Dialectical logic and growth, which Mao Zedong and the Chinese leadership referred to as "Unity, Struggle, Unity," exposes the deadend that is liberal identity politics.[67] If we cannot overcome this liberalism, we will continue to cannibalize ourselves. Dialectics is the real movement of history. If you are looking to join a fighting organization, search for one who doesn't just talk the talk, but walks the walk.[68]

Marxists have a dialectical sense of justice and see the folly and hand of the capitalists in the infantile Cancel Culture. It will be important to further elaborate on these concepts, first through practice, then through theoretical summations. The best way to critique the snakes in the grass in the Democratic Party and the liberal left is to build the dialectical pole of justice.

ACP Executive Board member Eddie Liger-Smith said[69] it best at the conclusion of the Free America to Free Palestine conference in Dearborn, Michigan in May of 2024: "And for those people who do nothing but deride, attack and smear us, guess what, the door will always be open. We'll be here building when you get over your purity fetish and you come and decide to help us change this social system into one that actually serves the people!"

Join us! We won't betray you. We won't turn our back on you. We won't cancel you. Because we never have. We are the Congress of the Canceled and the Convention of the Condemned.[70] Without over-glorifying the task before us, we see the potential in everybody. Materialist philosophy teaches us that what can be done, can be undone. We can combat and transcend centuries of

---

67. Mao Tse-tung. *Marxists.org* "ON THE CORRECT HANDLING OF CONTRADICTIONS AMONG THE PEOPLE." February 27, 1957

68. Noah Khrachvik, "Walk the Walk: How to Conduct Ourselves as Communists." MIDWESTERN MARX INSTITUTE. 7/22/2022.

69. Midwestern Marx. (2024, May 28). *Eddie Liger Speaks at the Free America to Free Palestine Event*. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOT1HwOwZ-I

70. The historical performance of the lumpenproletariat both in the Capitalist West and Global South deserve the dialectical treatment that Marx, Engels, Fanon and the Black Panther for Self Defense afforded it. The author is merely agitating in this sentence.

indoctrination, disunity and underdevelopment and free America and the world once and for all.

4

Hindsight Anti-Imperialism: The Compatible Critics of US Foreign Policy

Edward Liger Smith[1]

In March of 2023 the Iraq war architect and cheerleader David Frum published an article in the *Atlantic* titled "The Iraq War Reconsidered."[2] The article is riddled with factual inaccuracies and is far too charitable to the U.S. policy makers who made the decision to invade Iraq. However, what is interesting about this is that even David Frum, one of the Iraq war's greatest supporters, now had to admit in hindsight that the war in Iraq was based on lies, and that the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime accomplished none of the goals that U.S. policy makers said that it would. Rather than bringing freedom and democracy to Iraq as the public was promised, the country was plunged into a state of civil war which allowed extremist groups like ISIS to rise to prominence.

---

1. Eddie Liger Smith is an Executive of the American Communist Party and a Director of the Midwestern Marx Institute.

2. David Frum, "The Iraq War Reconsidered." *The Atlantic*. March 13, 2023. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/03/iraq-war-us-invasion-anniversary-2023/673343/.

Of course, David Frum is completely wrong when he treats the US-led invasion of Iraq as if it were a well-intentioned mistake, rather than what it was: a deliberate and murderous regime change effort designed to secure Iraqi natural resources, particularly oil, for Western multinational corporations. The oil industry spent more money than they ever had on an election previously in order to get George Bush and Dick Cheney elected. One would have to be incredibly naive to believe that these politicians ever had any intention of bringing freedom and democracy to Iraq. They had a laser focus on the fifth largest oil supply in the world. In fact, representatives from Chevron, ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips, and Halliburton met with Cheney and staff in 2003 to discuss their plans for Iraq's post-war oil industry. Prior to the invasion the oil was completely nationalized and in the hands of the Iraqi government, but within 10 years it had been almost completely privatized and monopolized by Western energy firms.[3]

And now, twenty years after Frum helped to lie America into a war in Iraq which was disastrous for everyone involved except for western corporations and shareholders. This stooge of capital or Imperialism personified still has the gall to lecture us about the colonial invasion and occupation while attempting to absolve himself of any guilt. Retroactively, he now condemns the regime-change operation that he helped to create. Frum's analysis of the war twenty years later, and his admittance that the war was "a grave and costly failure" constitutes what I have called hindsight anti-imperialism, which is a concept that I intend to expand upon in this essay.

Definition:

Hindsight anti-imperialism: The cheerleading of a regime change effort when it is being prepared, or is actively in motion, followed by the retroactive condemnation of said regime change effort, after it has been revealed to the public that it was based on lies, led to mass suffering, and/or failed to produce the promised results.

I began to notice the phenomenon of hindsight anti-imperialism after a handful of years being involved with the anti-war movement and covering the crimes of

3. Judith Juhasz, "The Iraq War and Oil," *CNN*, March 19, 2013, www.cnn.com/2013/03/19/opinion/iraq-war-oil-juhasz/index.html.

imperialism for the Midwestern Marx Institute. In 2019, when reporting on the US State Department's efforts to foment regime change in Syria, I was surprised to be criticized by "progressives" who were in favor of the active war in Syria, but against the war in Iraq that had been launched fifteen years prior. The same supposedly anti-war progressives who retroactively condemned the invasion of Iraq were now cheering on, or at least refusing to condemn, the NATO led war in Syria. Largely because they were afraid to be accused of supporting Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. As a young anti-imperialist, something did not sit well with me. I wondered: "Why are these so-called leftists on the same side as the imperialists themselves?"

Not coincidentally, the same phenomena took place in the leadup to the Iraq war, as anyone standing against it was accused of supporting the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Looking back in hindsight it's easy to see that standing against the toppling of Hussein's government, which plunged Iraq into chaos, is not equivalent to supporting all the actions of his regime (which at one point was propped up by the CIA).[4] However, by the time the American public realized that fact, and by the time the corporate media admitted it, it was already too late. Hundreds of thousands of American and Iraqi lives had already been lost, and Iraq's oil industry had been seized by the western energy companies who lobbied for the war in the first place.

When the spin masters beat the drums of war it can be difficult for some to make the distinction between uncritically supporting a world leader and standing against a murderous regime change effort led by the American empire. It's more difficult to see through the lies of imperialism when every mainstream media outlet in existence is telling you that you're an immoral piece of garbage who supports genocide if you don't go along with the current regime change effort. Such as when they told the public that if we didn't support NATO's regime change efforts in Libya then we were actually in favor of Muammar Gaddafi giving his soldiers Viagra to encourage them to rape more, a story which was heavily pushed by the American media during the first months of the NATO (or western) bombing campaign that turned out to be completely fake[5] How many hindsight anti-imperialists fell for the atrocity propaganda about

4. Matthew M. Aid, "Exclusive: CIA Files Prove America Helped Saddam as He Gassed Iran," *Foreign Policy*, August 26, 2013, https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/08/26/exclusive-cia-files-prove-america-helped-saddam-as-he-gassed-iran/.

5. Kerry Sanders, "U.S. Troops' Actions in Iraq War Justified, Bush Says," *NBC News*, March 19, 2013, https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna42824884.

Gaddafi and cheered on the regime change effort in Libya, only to retroactively condemn the intervention after we predictably discovered that it was based on lies? How many so-called leftists started criticizing NATO's war only after it sent Libya spiraling into a political-economic disaster which saw their central government disintegrate and allowed slavery to return to the country?

As the decade drew to a close, after witnessing two disastrous wars in Libya and Syria, I found myself asking how many times are we, the American public, going to fall for the same lies from the same imperialist families like the Bush's, Clinton's, and Cheney's until we realize they're full of shit!?!

The Dismemberment of Libya

It is well known at this point that NATO's intervention in Libya turned the country from one of the most prosperous in all of Africa, to an impoverished nation in a state of perpetual civil war with no real central government to speak of. Is there anyone out there who still legitimately believes that this war in Libya was waged to promote freedom? "Freedom" equals destruction, death, and slavery if the US imperialists are to be believed.

Even Obama himself, the commander in chief at the time of the NATO intervention in Libya, now admits that the war was the worst mistake of his entire presidency.[6] And here we see that hindsight anti-imperialism can take two separate forms. The first form is the leftist who genuinely regrets participating in spreading regime change propaganda after looking back in hindsight and realizing the war they supported has had disastrous human impacts. The second type of hindsight anti-imperialist are the politicians like David Frum and Barack Obama, who retroactively claim to regret the wars that they helped to create in order to clean up their public image, and to gain credibility for the next time they try to push our country into a war. As if to say, "sure I was wrong about the last war… but you can trust me this time!"

The problem with hindsight anti-imperialist leftists is that many still fail to see the economic motivations that are actually underpinning US and NATO policy. Even when, at times, the ruling class is explicit about such economic

6. "US House Passes Bill to Prevent Gun Sales to People on Terrorist Watch List," *BBC News*, March 2, 2016, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36013703.

motivations, these leftists completely miss them. A good recent example is when NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg admitted that NATO is good for the profits of US arms manufacturers.[7] Every US foreign policy action is masked in rhetoric expressing good intentions of promoting freedom and democracy. But this rhetoric is nothing except a mask for the actual animating force behind US foreign policy which is always rooted in political economy, particularly the accumulation of capital and the extraction of surplus value. The INTENT of US and NATO led regime change efforts is never actually to promote freedom and democracy, but to further the accumulation of capital by clearing any obstacles to the super exploitation of foreign nations by Western multinational corporations. The justifications given by U.S. policy makers for invading a country often have nothing to do with the actual reasons for launching the intervention.

Is it more likely that Obama, Susan Rice, Samantha Power, Hillary Clinton, and the other neoliberal architects of the war in Libya, actually intended to bring them freedom and democracy, but failed? Or is it more likely that Western multinational corporations wanted access to the resources that Libya had been reinvesting in their own economic development for years under Gaddafi, while preventing those resources from being extracted out of Africa by foreign multinationals? We must recall that Gaddafi planned to create an African development bank which would have financed the development of industry and agriculture throughout the entire continent and given African nations an alternative to the US dominated global financial system which revolves around the IMF and World Bank, which are notorious for trapping African nations in debt and using it as leverage to manipulate their political systems. The hindsight anti-imperialist politicians would like you to believe that it was an honest mistake, which is why they came to us to apologize years later.

The reality is that the US and NATO did not want Gaddafi's alternative system of African finance to come about, so they assassinated him. But NATO and Obama could not admit that they simply wanted to overthrow Gaddafi's government to protect their economic interests, so they justified the regime change effort by demonizing him and portraying him as a threat to humanity. Today they are forced to reckon with the disastrous human impacts of their war especially as tens of thousands of Libyan refugees flee across the

7. "Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Wilson Center Auditorium followed by Q&A," NATO, June 17, 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_226742.htm.

Mediterranean Sea into Europe. Thus, our politicians come back to us and apologize, trying to convince the public that the war was just a well-intentioned oopsie-daisy, lest we might discover what their true motivations were from the beginning. The politician hindsight anti-imperialist is desperate to prevent the leftist hindsight anti-imperialist from understanding the true engine of US foreign policy, because such an understanding has the potential to turn the leftist into a REAL anti-imperialist, who will stand against the next regime change effort the politicians try to sell us. The American political ruling class deeply fears an American public, and especially an American working class, which realizes that US foreign policy is not rooted in abstract ideals of freedom and democracy, but rather, the material accumulation of capital and extraction of surplus value and profit.

The leftist hindsight anti-imperialist is actually one of the greatest weapons that the empire and the political hindsight anti-imperialist has, as the leftist can be relied upon to attack real anti-imperialists by smearing them as dictator supporters from within their own ranks. There is no better example of this than the Occupy Wall Street in 2011, when some of the organizers tried to bring an anti-imperialist element to the protests by standing against the developing war in Libya and passing out literature in an effort to show those who were there to protest corporate shareholders and big banks that it was these same entities who were pushing for the invasion. These anti-war protestors were smeared, derided, and even spit on by occupy protestors, many of whom would become hindsight anti-imperialists in the coming years as they learned more about what actually happened in Libya. And in this way the hindsight anti-imperialists helped to kill anti-war organizing on the American left while helping to justify a regime change effort being led by the very same people who they were in New York City to protest against.

If we hope to build a movement that can actually combat US imperialism and bring an end to these senseless wars for profit, we must overcome hindsight anti-imperialism by learning to see through the lies of empire and to stand against imperialism even when the media and politicians are beating the war drums.

Lenin and The Importance of a Theoretical Understanding

In 2020, after receiving my bachelor's in politics, I read a short book written in 1917 which helped me to understand global politics better than anything I had read in four years of undergraduate study. That book was *Imperialism: The highest Stage of Capitalism* by Vladimir Lenin. While I was very aware of US imperialism at the time, and the role that it played in impoverishing the global South while enriching shareholders on Wall Street, I had never seen someone so clearly and concisely explain the economic motivations that drive an empire. The most consequential war of Lenin's era was World War I, a conflict which I was never able to wrap my mind around in history classes. The explanations given by my teachers never made sense to me as I didn't understand why the world superpowers would allow themselves to be dragged into such a deadly conflict simply because Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated and various countries had alliances with one another. However, the explanation given by Lenin, that these were imperialist countries fighting each other over control of the colonies… Now that was an explanation I could believe.

Not only did this book help me to understand World War I, but it also opened my eyes to see that the justifications given by American politicians and media figures as to why we launch certain regime change efforts in certain countries, actually have nothing to do with the real reasons motivating the imperialist aggression. The US empire's goal is never to protect freedom and democracy, it is to protect export capital, which is a brilliant concept that Lenin uses to describe oil drills and other forms of machinery, constant capital in Marxist terms, which is set up in foreign countries by imperialist multinational corporations in order to extract cheap resources and bring them back to the home country, or to sell them on various global markets. When countries attempt to nationalize or regulate these sectors of the economy, taking the constant capital out of the hands of Western multinationals and putting it into the hands of the state, the imperialists often look to foment regime change in order to prevent it from happening.

Additionally, these imperialist multinationals seek cheap labor, or what Marx calls variable capital. When a nation moves to increase wages or allows workers to unionize and fight for better pay and working conditions, the imperialist country often gets involved and attempts to destabilize their political system. This is always done at the behest of multinational corporations who use various means to control the political system. In the early 2000s it was large energy companies who spent millions lobbying for the war in Iraq and funding political campaigns in order to request favors later on from the

politicians they funded. A more recent example in 2019 is the country of Bolivia, whose socialist Government had nationalized some major industries, strengthened unions, and raised the wages of their working class. That was before a US backed group of fascists led by Jeanine Áñez orchestrated a violent and illegal coup that saw trade union leaders brutally murdered,[8]. and sent the democratically elected President Evo Morales into exile. Because Bolivia is known for its vast lithium reserves, and American capitalist Elon Musk is known for making electric cars which require lithium batteries to operate, many people on social media accused him of supporting the coup. In response to these criticisms Musk said that “we will coup whoever we want! Deal with it.” leaving little doubt in anyone's mind why this fascist coup had been carried out and at whose behest.[9].

Lenin’s *Imperialism* helped me to demystify US imperialism, and I began to see imperialism not as an action, but as the dominant world economic system which developed out of capitalism. The capitalist mode of production inherently necessitates expansion, and when the capitalists of one nation have attained full control of its markets, they go abroad to dominate and super exploit foreign nations. Imperialist capitalists then come to rely on the super profits they make abroad, and they make it their mission to prevent anything from impeding the extraction of surplus value from other countries, even if that means killing millions of people in murderous wars. This is the nature of US imperialism and the global capitalist system of today.

New Developments Since Lenin's Imperialism

However, a few things have changed since Lenin’s time, especially since the conclusion of World War II, and his analysis needs to be updated. For one, after the war the United States emerged as the hegemonic global superpower because most of the fighting had happened in Europe, which devastated their infrastructure, and made it almost impossible to hang on to their colonies in the

---

8. Sarah Jaffe, ”Orlando Gutiérrez: A Bolivian Union Leader on the Struggle for Democracy and Socialism,” *Jacobin*, October 2020, https://jacobin.com/2020/10/bolivian-mining-trade-union-leader-orlando-gutierrez-democracy-socialism

9. John P. Jackson, ”After Bolivia, Elon Musk Says Capitalists Can Overthrow Any Government They Want,” *People's World*, October 22, 2020, https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/after-bolivia-elon-musk-says-capitalists-can-overthrow-any government-they-want/

global South. The US replaced the UK as the most powerful empire in the world, enjoying almost unchecked power if not for the Soviet Union in the East, which would of course fall in 1990 removing the umbrella of protection that it had provided for many countries in the Global South, including Iraq. Today, rather than having a bunch of smaller competing empires, we have one dominant and hegemonic empire that has subordinated the former West European empires to its own interests.

At this time colonialism also underwent a transformation in form, as independence movements swept across the Global South, achieving more and more success as the European powers attempted to recover from the devastation wrought upon them by the German imperialists and the scourge of Nazism in World War II. Dozens of states across Africa and Asia fought and gained independence in the years following the war, and this time period is where we see a qualitative shift from colonialism into neo-colonialism. The Western powers could no longer subjugate poorer nations as formal colonies, as the world began to accept that every nation should have the right to self-determination and self-governance. However, the idea that colonialism ended here is nothing but a bourgeois imperialist myth. This simply marked the transition to neocolonialism where Western imperialist powers dominate the economies of poorer nations, and manipulate their political systems in secret, while claiming that these countries are actually free and independent.

Before the qualitative shift from colonialism to neocolonialism wealthy capitalist countries did not have to lie so much about their imperialist efforts around the world, as they unapologetically and directly controlled their colonies while giving some lame justifications about bringing them civilization and Christianity. However, after the world asserted its support for independence and the national right to self-determination, the imperialist countries, and especially the United States (the newly emergent imperialist hegemon), needed to adjust their strategy slightly. If they wanted to continue extracting endless surplus value out of the global South, they needed to convince the public that these nations still remained independent and free. They needed to give the impression of being democratic nations while allowing Western multinationals to pillage their resources behind the scenes. Therefore, propaganda and narrative control became more important to the imperialists than ever. When a regime change effort was carried out it either needed to be done so in secret, or the public had to be convinced that the war or coup was being done in the name of protecting freedom, human rights, and democracy.

Public support would not be given if people understood that the regime change effort was being waged in order to enrich big banks and shareholders who most of the American public already hates.

The Decimation of Life in Korea and Vietnam

After Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and their region of the world known as Indochina, gained independence from French colonialism in 1954 after a long anti-colonial struggle, the United States swooped in in 1955 and began waging the Vietnam War (termed, more correctly, the "American War" by the Vietnamese). And while the US tried to justify this war with rhetoric about freedom, democracy, and combatting communist totalitarianism, in reality, they were only trying to fill the colonial void that France had left. The goal was to set up a puppet dictatorship, like the one that lasted a laughably short amount of time in Saigon, and to control Vietnam from afar without having to assert direct political control over the government, unlike the French during the era of direct colonialism. This new era of neo-colonialism required that the US install government officials who masqueraded as legitimate leaders, while in reality acting as puppets of Western capital and handing their economies over to Western companies.

During this war in Indochina the CIA would covertly carry out the now notorious Phoenix Program, which assassinated, tortured, and captured Viet Minh soldiers, even attempting to brainwash them with mind-altering drugs like LSD, using techniques that were developed by the equally notorious MK Ultra project. The US also waged a completely secret bombing campaign in Laos which saw more cluster bombs dropped on the small agrarian country than any other nation in history. This is literally known as the Secret War, because Americans had no knowledge of its existence, and President Richard Nixon openly lied to the public and press claiming that there was no US military involvement in Laos. Nixon also lied about which areas were being targeted in Cambodia, where Henry Kissinger instructed the US Air Force to bomb "anything that moves." These secret operations highlight the covert nature of neocolonialism, which involves all the same violence of direct colonialism, but with more lies and secrecy to prevent the public from finding out that the ruling class is simply trying to subjugate another country to complete economic control.

There are countless examples of the US swooping in after World War II to try and control a country that recently fought and gained independence from the European colonialists. The Korean War began shortly after the Koreans gained their independence from the notoriously brutal Japanese occupation in 1945. During this war the US murdered 20% of the population in Northern Korea, decimated their infrastructure, manufactured a voting plan at the UN to split the Korean Peninsula in half, occupied the Southern half, and installed a fascist dictator named Syngham Rhee who was trained up in American universities. At the time, Americans knew next to nothing about what was going on, only being told that we were fighting for Democracy and against so-called Communist totalitarianism in Korea. In reality, our government and military were slaughtering their people and installing a totalitarian dictator who committed some of the worst massacres in human history. Syngham Rhee is a perfect example of the kind of puppet leaders that are set up by neo-colonial powers in order to control a nation's political system from afar, without having to assert direct political control, and while feigning support for independence. While Rhee was portrayed as an independent Democratic leader in Western media, the only reason he was able to stay in power was because he massacred all of his political opponents.

Another example is Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire, now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo. Seko's US backed government became the quintessential example of a kleptocracy, i.e., a dictatorial and corrupt government that expropriates its own people in order to enrich government officials. The struggle against Belgian colonialism in Zaire was led by the heroic nationalist named Patrice Lumumba, who would have naturally been first in line to lead his country after gaining independence in 1960, and who had many exciting plans for African economic development. However, covert US support to Mobutu allowed his forces to capture, torture, and assassinate the freedom fighter Lumumba in 1961, which cleared the way for Mobutu himself to seize power in 1965. Mobutu proceeded to enrich himself and his cronies in the coming years while essentially handing over the Zaire/Congolese economy to Western multinational corporations. And yet another country that waged a long and arduous struggle against European colonialism fell to the control of US neocolonialism almost immediately after.

This shift to neocolonialism, to a new form of imperialism, is what allowed the hindsight anti-imperialists to emerge *en masse*. It is why so many people get confused when US regime change efforts are happening and when the media's

war drums are beating. Not only are people manipulated by the American media, which is almost totally monopolized by just six corporations, but they also believe that the era of colonialism has ended, and don't understand that the multinational corporations who run our country are reliant on extracting super profits from the global South. And this is why it is so important for us to combat hindsight anti-imperialism by helping people to gain a theoretical understanding of what is actually going on. Without understanding the economic motivations behind US imperialism, which could more accurately be described as capitalist imperialism, there is no way to understand these regimes change efforts at all, and they just appear as blunders made by well-intentioned politician hindsight anti-imperialists.

It is no coincidence that the IMF and World Bank were founded in 1944 as the second world war drew to a close, and three years later the most notorious arm of US imperialism in existence would be founded… The Central Intelligence Agency. These institutions helped usher in the new era of capitalist imperialism where regime change efforts either had to be justified to the public or carried out in secret. One of the first known CIA coups was the overthrow of Guatemalan leader Jacobo Árbenz who had plans to redistribute some of his country's land that was owned by the Western multinational corporation United Fruit Company, but which was not being used productively. The CIA was involved in the overthrow of Árbenz every step of the way helping to disseminate propaganda and train up the soon to be military dictator Carlos Castillo Armas, who would lead the coup with the help of his right-wing National Liberation Movement party and other reactionary sections of the Guatemalan military. Árbenz and his government were quickly deposed, and he would die in 1971 after his body was found boiling in a scalding hot bathtub.[10]

However, for years the CIA's involvement in this regime change effort was a mystery, and a leaked CIA document showed that in the 1950s the agency's strategy was to label anyone that accused them of involvement in Guatemala of being a "conspiracy theorist," which is a tactic that should sound very familiar to the anti-imperialists of today. The CIA's covert efforts in Guatemala did not become public knowledge until documents were leaked on May 23, 1997, including an instructional guide on assassination. The American public now knew that the conspiracy theorists had been correct, and many hindsight anti-imperialists emerged. Today almost every American citizen who knows

10. "Santa Barbara's Isla Vista," *The Daily Sound*, January 28, 1971, https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=DS19710128.2.17&e=-------en--20--1--txt-txIN--------.

the story of Guatemala is opposed to what the CIA did there, but how much good does that do 70 years later? Hindsight anti-imperialism is completely worthless if you don't learn from your mistakes and stand up against the next act of imperialist aggression!

Another covert method of regime change and geopolitical influence are sanctions and embargo. This is where we see the importance of the IMF, the World Bank, and their thousands of subsidiary banks which make up the US dominated global financial system which was constructed after the second world war. Many in the American public do not view sanctions as an act of war, and these sanctions are always justified by the imperialist politicians who claim that they are only targeting specific contemptible individuals, and that the real intentions of the sanctions are to help the people of the country being targeted. However, this is nothing but a justification for what amounts to old fashioned siege tactics where the US tries to cut off target countries from global finance and trade in order to starve and worsen the living conditions of their people and turn them against the government.

A recent UN report on the effect of US sanctions on Venezuela exposed the real effects of the over 160 economic sanctions that the US has placed on the county, concluding that they had decreased Venezuela's government revenue by approximately 99%![11]. Far from protecting human rights and democracy, these sanctions are intended to both foment regime change, and to undo the gains that were made by Hugo Chavez and his Bolivarian Revolution that began in the late 1990s. Chavez had massively increased access to healthcare, education, literacy, and housing while creating pensions for elderly Venezuelans for the first time and massively decreasing malnutrition and extreme poverty. These enormous feats were accomplished by kicking Western multinationals and executives out of the PDVSA which is the Venezuelan oil company that had become subservient to western capital pre-Chavez. Now the US attempts to starve the Venezuelan people and turn them against their government so that they can once again gain access to Venezuelan oil, while telling the American public that these sanctions are intended to combat corruption and so-called authoritarianism. The US is able to do this with impunity because of the IMF

11. "Preliminary Findings of the Visit to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela by the Special Rapporteur," *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, February 12, 2021, https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/02/preliminary-findings-visit-bolivarian-republic-venezuela-special-rapporteur

and World Bank, and the dominance that they allow the US to have over the global financial system, although thankfully that dominance is now being challenged by nations like China and Russia who constitute an emerging multipolar world, and a real challenge to US unipolar hegemony.[12]

The Marxist View of International Relations

When we understand the economic motivations that underpin US imperialism, the foreign policy actions of our government no longer seem so confusing, and in fact they become quite simple. The US government is dominated by corporations who want to super exploit foreign countries and extract surplus value and profit. When pesky foreign governments get in the way of that surplus value extraction the US government, the IMF and World Bank, the CIA, or more modern arms of regime change like the NED (an institution created under Ronald Reagan to essentially be a private version of the CIA that does their bidding without being directly connected to the US government) get involved in order to overthrow or weaken that government, and clear the way for unimpeded surplus value extraction.

As socialists who want to create a better world by ending imperialism, we cannot fall into hindsight anti-imperialism, or at least we must learn from our mistakes. The empire is totally fine with you becoming anti-imperialist twenty years after a successful regime change effort has been carried out, and as we've explained the imperialists even do this themselves quite often, although usually only to further manipulate the narrative. However, what the imperialists fear is a public that understands why their government does what it does, and who stand against the regime change efforts even when the US media is calling us genocide supporting, authoritarian, communist, fascists, for doing so!

By studying theory and books like Lenin's *Imperialism* we can become nearly impervious to the corporate media's lies, and we can truly start to see American imperialism for what it is. Anybody can dissect a regime change effort years after it happened. Even the corporate puppets at the New York Times often do this, such as in 1991 when they vigorously supported the overthrow of the

12. Carlos L. Garrido, "The U.S. Is Fabricating Foes to Conceal Its Own Unfreedom," *The China Academy*, October 12, 2023, https://thechinaacademy.org/the-u-s-is-fabricating-foes-to-conceals-its-own-unfreedom/.

Haitian liberation theologist and priest Jean Bertrande Aristide by pumping out endless propaganda about his government, only to turn around after Aristide had been illegally and undemocratically removed from power to write a piece explaining that the US was deeply involved in the coup and retroactively condemning it well after it had already happened.

Friends, we must be better anti-imperialists than the New York Times if we actually wish to see the overthrow of capitalist imperialism in our lifetime. We need to educate ourselves and learn to see through the lies of our government and media. Millions of people across the country are already doing this, as trust in the US government and corporate media is now at an all time low. Yet there is still much work to be done, as evidenced by the fact that there are still people who know that the government lied to us about Iraq, Libya, and Syria, but believe for some reason that the US is now telling the truth about Ukraine or China. Folks, they were lying to us then and they are lying to us now. It is time to stand up for ourselves and stop being led by the nose into these disastrous wars that get young Americans killed. It is on us to study intensively and learn to see through the bullshit.

5

Marxism and Tradition

Grayson S. Walker[1]

Edited speech given by Grayson S. Walker for the "Traditionalism" Panel of the Multipolarity Forum held in Moscow, Russia (February 2024).

Marxism is, perhaps justifiably, usually seen as the vanguard of progress against tradition. At face value, it asserts a dogmatic, Western-centric secular methodology against the wealth of traditions that define and give body to a people. Concrete humanity, finding itself abstracted from the wealth of its real historical existence in the process of proletarianization, is "compelled to face with sober senses [its] real conditions of life and his relations with his kind."[2] It follows, according to Western Marxism, that the ideal forms to which man's social existence is given expression—forms already caught up in the process of

---

1. Grayson S. Walker, J.D., is an American researcher, political analyst, and co-founder of the Infrared Collective and American Communist Party, where he serves on the Politburo as legal co-director. He previously served on the Executive Board of the Emory International Law Review, where he organized the 2024 Symposium on Disputed Territories. He has published several academic articles, including *'From Instragram to Infowar: The Weaponization of Social Media and its Consequences'*, *'Through the Brook of Fire: Marx's Concept of Species-Being and his Break with Feuerbach,'* and the forthcoming article *'Marxism and Democracy.'* Grayson has been invited to speak at conferences worldwide, including Guancha's annual Key, Northwestern University's ILASS, and the Multipolarity Forum. Awarded a research fellowship in Nepal, he focused on integrating China's Belt & Road Initiative with the traditional ways of life of Nepali ethnic minorities. Grayson has been recognized with several academic awards from Xavier University and Emory Law School.

2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York and London: Verso, 2012).

destruction as they pass through the thresher of modernity—are a mere remnant of a past, pre-capitalist epoch condemned by history itself. Mankind asymptotically and forever approaches the absolute zero represented by Malevich's *Black Square* as it increasingly loses any semblance of humanity to the nihil of abstract progress and modernity, powered by the ultimate abstraction of capital as estranged human labor.

But this is a Marxism narrowly defined within the framework of modern Western metaphysics and its foreclosure of the question of Being, a framework which had no greater critic than Marx himself and which was practically confronted in the form of 20th Century Communism.[3] It is curious that "Western Marxism," as originally articulated by György Lukács (but whose origins can already be found before the Second International), has acquired the status of being "True Marxism," given that its consequences for the real world pale in comparison to the Eastern variety of Marxism.

For Western Marxism generally, nothing can be said of tradition except that it precedes the revolutionary moment. Within this conception, all tradition must be mercilessly swept away to clear room for the Communist future. Such was the immature view shared by the early Soviet avant-garde, whose reckless attempts at liquidating the past were rejected by Lenin and even more aggressively opposed by Stalin.[4]

Minimal consideration of reality forces us to consider Marxism not as an ideological abstraction, but as an index of acquired historical experience. In the 20th Century, Communism overcame its immature overenthusiasm for the Ideal and, in its response to the various convulsions encountered on the path through industrial modernity, began to cultivate a material basis in the national, historical, and civilizational realities of the countries over which Communists

---

3. Marx already furnished the basis for a materialist critique of Western rationalism, accomplished long before his supposed "epistemological break" in favor of science in his turn to political economy. Already in *The German Ideology*, Marx writes how "[t]he phantoms of [mankind's] brains have got out of their hands. They, the creators, have bowed down before their creations. Let us liberate them from the chimeras, the ideas, dogmas, imaginary beings under the yoke of which they are pining away. **Let us revolt against the rule of thoughts**." Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (New York: Prometheus, 1998), 29. Marxism, already from the beginning of Marx's early thought, was already a rejection of Western rationalism and its idolatry of form.

4. *See* Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, trans. Charles Rougle (New York and London: Verso, 2011).

gained power. [5] The concrete meaning of class struggle itself acquired a significance that was only discernible in the tempering of abstract thought with its real material premises in the people of Eastern Europe and Asia.

This significance can be seen in the theoretical concessions Lenin made to the significance of the peasantry, in Stalin's promotion of national traditions and the rehabilitation of the Orthodox Church, and more explicitly in the Communist Party of China's Sinification of Marxism. While at first glance the "purity" of Marxism may seem sacrileged by the incursion of an "impure" national-historical element, a closer appreciation for the significance of these "turns" that Marxism-Leninism is defined by instead reveals that the flame of modernity was only ever a purifying flame distilling the *essence* of a people's real and living Being. What is genuine and enduring is proven in the fire. Communism, as *the real movement of history itself*, is the perseverance of humanity through the fires of capitalistic modernity and in the resubstantialization of its existence *through* this modernity.

Therein lies the "conservatism" of Marxist-Leninist states: forced to reconcile itself with the basis of its existence, the political state of the Soviet Union reflected "Great Russia" (*Velikaya Rus'*) and the People's Republic of China a Confucio-Marxist Celestial Empire (华夏). Communism distilled the essence of the real civilizational context the class struggle is born from; it did not liquidate real Being out of fidelity to some abstract dogma, but clarified it as the very site of the class struggle's meaning in the first place.

Marxism-Leninism defends the integrity and sanctity of history, and in giving expression to the common nexus that binds a particular people as a people, preserves the spirit of their real Being through its apparent dissolution in modernity.[6] The failures of the idealist excesses of socialist construction

---

5. The revival of "civilization states"/empires in the age of multipolarity/socialism can likewise be understood as the revenge of the pre-Westphalian civilizational being of humanity before its subjugation and division by European colonialism and its imposition of the nation-state as the absolute horizon for political sovereignty. History is actively proving the redundancy of this Westphalian nation-state, from the Russian Special Military Operation to the strivings towards re-delimitation of borders and regional integration across Africa and the Middle East. "The modern State is only truly a State if it is an Empire," i.e., a *civilization-state* (文明型国家). *See* Alexander Kojève, "Outline of a Doctrine of French Policy," *Hoover Institution* (August 1, 2004; originally written in French in 1945): https://www.hoover.org/research/outline-doctrine-french-policy.

6. Whereas the chief error in reactionary politics, in addition to its vain attempt to turn back the tide of history, is the reduction of a people's tradition to a mere *form* separate and apart from its

sobered Communists to an extent considered intolerable by liberals, who deride historical Communism and its "conservative turn" in Stalinism as a form of "red fascism."[7] The traditionalism and conservatism of historical Marxism-Leninism was not a "betrayal" of the revolution, but its maturation.

The essence of Communism is revealed to be the revival of the very traditions and civilizations it originally endeavored to overthrow. The flame of revolution was only ever a purifying flame, a flame which, far from consuming the historical traditions of mankind, liberated them from the bourgeois rubbish corrupting them to the core.

Only Marxism has, in spite of its tumultuous experience, succeeded in preserving the perennial tradition in the midst of industrial modernity. The conclusion of (don't laugh!) "traditionalist" German Nazism and Italian Fascism was the subjugation of the German and Italian peoples to international finance capital and modern abstractions of "progressive" ideology, which at the time was explicitly identified with eugenics and pseudoscientific "race science." The Communist East, meanwhile, remains the iron fist of humanity against the tyranny of Western finance capital and its mutilation of Being.

For in the end, what is tradition? Tradition is the accumulation of mankind's tried and tested practices, ways of life, and wisdoms — tested and adapted over the course of generations. It is what is *provably* antifragile and objective about a people's Being, the *objective footprint* of Dasein on history (*Geschichte*) itself.

Marxism is a science of history, a real method and wholistic worldview necessary for acquiring knowledge over and totally integrating mankind's social existence — an existence suspended in a process of ceaseless development. But in contrast to the "Western Marxist" view, this development does not occur according to the whims of consciousness, "reason," or ideology,

---

basis in the living being of a people. This idolatry of reaction is exemplified in the "vaporwave" aesthetics adopted by online fascists in the 2010s and in the inauthentic appropriation of national imagery and cultural iconography in a particularly urbanite and abstract manner. *See* Infrared, "Socialist Patriotism: America vs. America," YouTube, Oct. 26, 2021, 23:18, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eveOKE4Ones&t=984s.

7. Soviet intellectuals disappointed with the failures of the Soviet Communism but likewise rejecting liberal capitalism, such as Eduard Limonov and Aleksandr Dugin, initially and positively identified with this label of "red fascism," which had more to do with an appreciation for the "conservative turn" in historical Communist politics than any affinity for historical fascism. *See* Aleksandr Dugin, "Fascism: Borderless and Red" (1997): https://www.stephenhicks.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/DuginA-Fascism-Borderless-Red.pdf.

but according to a historical truth already immanent and suspended in the process of realization. This is, after all, exactly what Marx means by Communism: the *real movement* that sublates the present state of things.

The history of the Soviet Union and modern-day China proves what is already known by all, but scandalous only from the perspective of Western ideological confusion: that Communism's legacy, far from being synonymous with the historical nihilism of contemporary Western Marxism, is the defender of the perennial traditions of mankind. ▮

6

The American Oligarchy

Paul Cockshott[1]

In 2014 a study went viral across the US press and internet. Princeton scholars reported that, by using modern quantitative political science techniques they had been able to conclusively prove that the USA was a political oligarchy not a democracy.

The authors used data from opinion polls to look at a huge sample, 1779 different public policy issues from the 1980s onwards, to see what the opinions of Americans of average income and the opinions of richer Americans (>$140,000 per year) were on topics. To this they added data on the public positions taken by business lobbying groups on these policies. Next they looked at the legislative outcomes of these 1779 policy debates and compared the outcomes with what people on average income, rich people and business lobbyists wanted. Using a statistical technique called Multivariate Analysis they looked to see how influential the views of these three groups were in deciding the final content of the laws.

---

1. Paul Cockshott is an economist and computer scientist. His best known books on economics are *Towards a New Socialism (1993)* and *How The World Works (2019)*. In computing he has worked on cellular automata machines, database machines, video encoding and 3D TV. In economics he works on Marxist value theory and the theory of socialist economy.

The results were striking. They found that in only 3% of the cases did the views of average citizens have any effect on the laws that were finally passed, whereas the views of the rich were influential in 76% and those of the business lobby affected the outcome in 56% of the time[21]. They conclude:

> *What do our findings say about democracy in America? They certainly constitute troubling news for advocates of "populistic" democracy, who want governments to respond primarily or exclusively to the policy preferences of their citizens. In the United States, our findings indicate, the majority does not rule—at least not in the causal sense of actually determining policy outcomes* [23]

It is not surprising that this research was newsworthy. On the one hand it contradicted the self image of the USA as the world's foremost champion of democracy. On the other it chimed with the increasingly widespread popular feeling that politics in the USA was corrupt, and that monied elites and lobbyists were manipulating things behind the backs of the ordinary voter.

But of course to Marxists this came as no surprise. This is what they had been saying since the mid 19th century "the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie. Marx and Engels 1848". Here was scientific confirmation of what they had always said. But how does this work?

How are the rich able to so completely dominate a state whose constitution is supposed to be democratic? The short answer is that the US constitution was never intended to be democratic. The long answer involves looking at the economic and class history of the USA to to see how its politics has operated. It is a mistake to see the American Revolution as a bourgeois democratic one. It was way different from great democratic revolutions like those in 18th century France or 20th century China. The radical character of the latter came from the peasantry rising up, taking over the estates of the landlords and completely

---

2. Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics* 12, no. 3 (2014): 564-581. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592714001595.

3. Page 576, ibid.

transforming property relations in the countryside. This expropriation removed the economic support for the old ruling classes, allowing a complete new state structure to be established.

The French, English and American revolutions all had a republican and anti-monarchial character, but repub licanism was more the political ideology of a landlord class defending itself from the encroachments of the King than anything democratic. In France, the rebelling aristocracy lost control, first to the urban bourgeoisie and were then consumed in the fires of peasant revolt. In America this loss of control never happened. The leadership con sisted of men of influence and standing, perhaps the most conservative leadership of any revolution in history[4]. To understand the constitution the Americans adopted you have to use the methods of On Contradiction[5] to examine the class contradictions of the day.

During the revolution, the fundamental contradiction was between the slave owning class of the colonies on one side and the British state and 4 Iroquois nations on the other. Against Britain, they aimed to gain exemption from taxes and tariffs, to get rid of restrictions that the King was imposing on large landed estates and to protect their holdings of slaves from being set free. Against the Iroquois, they wanted territory.

The fundamental contradiction governed the development of the secondary ones: between slave and slave owner, between landlord and tenant farmer. Because their direct oppressors were opposed to the British, slaves and tenant farmers tended to side with the British against the revolution. There was widespread loyalist (pro British) sentiment among the tenantry[6]. The British Governor Lord Dunmore issued a proclamation absolving the tenantry of their feudal quitrents owed to rebel landlords, and liberating all slaves who would take up arms against the rebels. The British raised several regiments of black former slaves during the war. There was a third order contradiction between free farmers and the local capitalists over debts owed by the farmers to the capitalists. The slave owning and capitalist leaders of the revolution were dependent on free farmers and artisans as soldiers, but feared that a directly

4. Richard B. Morris. ”Class Struggle and the American Revolution.” *The William and Mary Quarterly: A Magazine of Early American History* 19, no. 1 (1962): 4–29.

5. Zedong Mao. ”On Contradiction.” *Chinese Studies in Philosophy* 19, no. 2 (1987): 20–82.

6. Richard B. Morris. ”Class Struggle and the American Revolution.” *The William and Mary Quarterly: A Magazine of Early American History* 19, no. 1 (1962): 16.

democratic government dominated by free farmers would either inflate the currency or pass laws cancelling debts.

The class structure after independence was unlike anything in early capitalist Europe. You had to go back more than 2000 years to find something similar : the slave republic Rome on which the Americans consciously and deliberately modelled themselves. At the top was the slave owning aristocracy who did no direct productive work, but lived off the labour of the slaves. Below the aristocracy was a class of free citizens who worked for a living. These would be small family farmers or artisans. At the bottom were slaves with no political or civil rights, the private property of aristocrats. The main class conflicts were between the slave owners and the slaves on the one hand, and between the slave owners and the free citizens on the other. Since the slaves had no political rights either in Rome or the USA the conflict between them and the slave owners was brutally physical, with the owners' dominance enforced by whips and chains. Free citizens on the other hand had civil rights, and the fact that they outnumbered the richer slave owners meant that the political power of the slave owners was potentially threatened by the free peasants and artisans. The main conflict between the slave owners and free peasants was typically over land ownership. The progress of slavery meant that more and more land tended to befall under the control of the big slave estates, threatening to proletarianise the free citizens. In both Roman and the US, the free citizen farmers and artisans were for a time induced to become allies of the slave owners by the apparent threat of surrounding free nations. As with expansionist Rome, the external contradiction was between the propertied classes of the Republic and the surrounding free peoples. The expansionary imperialism of both states was driven by both the desire of the senatorial classes to acquire further estates, and more significantly, to promote colonies in which a potentially threatening proletariat could be settled as independent farmers. As Weber 2013 argued, the parallels between Roman and American peasantry were exact right down to the geometry of landholding. In both cases the land was divided up on a square grid of farm plots with long straight roads - something that only a conquering empire could achieve.

The American constitution is almost a direct copy of that of Rome. The Roman constitution was cleverly de signed to give the semblance of power to these free citizens whilst actually concentrating real power in a senatorial class. The state structure in Rome was made up of :

(1) The two Consuls who were elected for a year and who alternated in office on a monthly basis. They were equivalent to the President of the USA today. They had supreme command of the army and civil administration.

(2) The Senate, which could pass decrees and provide the class from which the consuls were generally chosen. The US Senate was explicitly modelled on this.

(3) The comitia centuriata or assembly of the centuries which elected the consuls by indirect election: almost exactly copied by the US electoral college.

(4) The Plebian Council. This was a mass democratic assembly that could pass laws. It could not however set its own agenda, having to vote on motions put to it by magistrates who were invariably from the upper classes.

The effect of this structure was that executive power in Rome was always held by a member of the slave owning patrician class. The Roman Senate likewise was always made up of slaveowners rather than common people. Similar effects were achieved in the USA. Of the first ten presidents of the USA only two, John Adams and John Quincy Adams, were not slave owners.

But a republic also relied on the free citizens as soldiers. These people had to be given the semblance but not the reality of power. In Rome the two mechanisms used to achieve this were elections, specifically indirect elections, and control over the agenda at the popular assembly by upper class magistrates. Elections, ancient political theorists argued, always favour the wealthy. Aristotle said “it is thought to be democratic for the offices to be assigned by lot, for them to be elected is oligarchic ”Aristotle 1988. The alternative technique, forming a council from a random sample of citizens as used in ancient Athens was rejected for the Roman oligarchic approach.

The rich can spend to influence elections and have an education that prepares them as orators. Indirect election will increase the effects of any bias : for example Bush won the 2000 election on the electoral college system even though he had fewer popular votes than Gore. Having executive power concentrated in the hands of one elected official is great for the wealthy. It takes a huge sum of money to win the election so the candidates inevitably become dependent on oligarchs.

Whilst ancient Rome at least allowed some element of direct democracy, in the US this element, the popular assembly was removed and replaced by the

elected house of representatives, where again, money speaks. Election to this body is often funded by wealthy oligarchsWinters 2011.

There have been 3 periods in US history when there was a danger that democracy might triumph: the Civil War, the Populist movement of the late 19th Century and from the New Deal to the 1960s. But in each case the oligarchy re-established power.

The 1860s Civil War marked the transition between the slave and feudal modes of production in the US. Al though the war abolished slavery, freed slaves soon lost civil rights. Klu Klux Klan terror and lynchings reduced them to the semi-feudal status of voteless sharecroppers. Not until the 1960s was their right to vote re-established. The same happened in Russia in the 1860s where freed serfs also became sharecroppers. Neither Alexander nor Lincoln broke the power of their landlord classes. The next crisis came with the populist movement grounded in the contradiction between the free peasants and the financial oligarchy. Lincoln had moved America to a fiat currency which helped the peasantry since the inflation that accompanied it depreciated their debts.

The bankers pressed for ’sound money’ and the gold standard, which would have threatened the mortgaged farms of the peasantry.

The peculiarity of the settler economy was that the availability of frontier land meant that no classical landlord class remained to exploit the free peasants. Once the native nations to the West had been conquered, any tenant farmer or proletarian in the East could potentially move to the frontier. But land was only the most important means of production.

If workers from the cities, or dispossessed European peasants settled on the frontier they needed other means of production: horses, oxen, tools, seed grain. This could be had on credit from the banking class, against the surety of their land.

Look at Figure 1. The USA had originally had a currency based on a silver dollar. From 1873 it moved onto the gold standard. In the next 30 years the value of gold appreciated hugely in terms of silver. Loans which had been taken out either in silver dollars or in ’greenbacks’ now had to be paid back in a a rapidly appreciating gold backed currency. The dollar price at which their

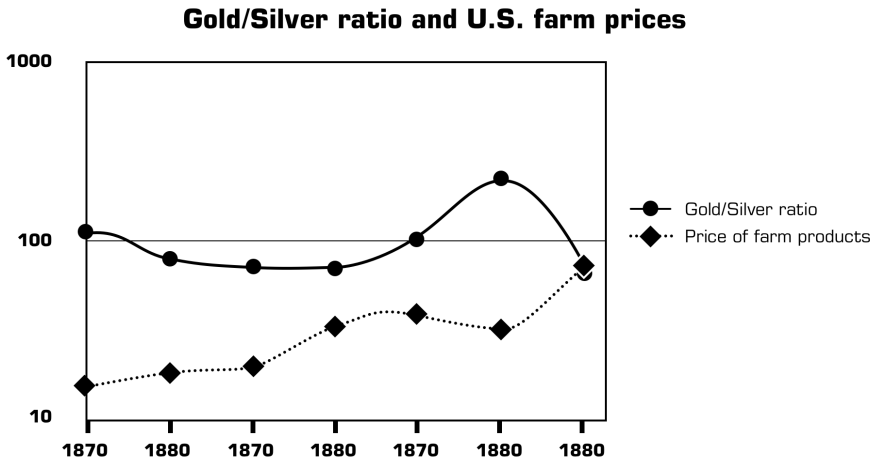

FIGURE 1. The movement of the price of gold measured in silver dollars alongside the price of farm products during the dispossession of the US peasantry. The Y axis is log scale to allow it to be seen in a small vertical space.

crops sold depreciated as gold became more valuable. The distress occurred in two great waves, the first during the late 19th century, the second from 1920 to the mid 1930s.

In the late 19th century a peasant populist movement fought for cheap money(return to silver) and democratic reforms : popular voting on legislation, the right of recall of officials; demands similar to those of Social Democracy in Germany and Russia. Despite victories at state level, they never gained power at the federal level.

The 20th century the US underwent a transition from a predominantly rural economy of semi feudal black peasants and independent white ones to a predominantly urban waged population. The agricultural depression from the 1930s allowed banks to foreclose on farms driving farmers into cities. In the South, the landlords made use of mechanisation[7] to dispense with and evict their black sharecroppers who also moved into the cities. The creation of a bigger working class population led to a strong labor union movement and black civil rights movement. It appeared by the 1960s, that the battle for democracy in America was at last being won.

7. Mechanised cotton picking machines went into production in 1935 and were widely adopted by the late 40s.

The period from the New Deal of Roosevelt to the Great Society of Johnston saw a decline in the share of income and wealth held by the oligarchy and a rise in the share going to the rest of the population but from the 1970s this reversed. Wealth in the US became concentrated in an ever smaller fraction of the population(Piketty and Goldhammer 2014) and as the study by Gilens and Page shows, this fraction exercised an almost total political control. The country has a police force that have reverted to their old slave patrol roles exercising internationally unprecedented levels of violence against blacks and poor white people, shooting over 450 dead in the first 5 months of 2015. When people protest this brutality they face police armed like commandos fresh from the war in Iraq.

Will democracy eventually come to the US? We can not just echo Zhou enlai on the outcome of the French Revolution and say it is too early to tell yet. After 240 years it is not too early. It is now certain that as long as the US retains its current constitution, the oligarchy there need have no fear of democracy. In the USA radical popular leaders from Lincoln to King had the delusion that the republic was democratic. I would tend to side with Lenin who wrote that a US type republic was the most perfect form of rule by the propertied classes. Once they gain control of it, no change of leaders or parties can shift them. The solid edifice of the republic will survive until some real cataclysm shakes it; something of the scale of those Japanese victories of 1905 and 1941 which unsteadied Russian and British empires. The USA has yet to meet its Tsushima in the South China Sea.

If we believe Mao, political power grows out of the barrel of a gun, without a people's army the population has nothing. The American people have the right to carry and bear arms, one of the key liberties they retain, but they have at no point succeeded, even at a local level, in raising popular militias able to resist the armed forces of the state. The state was able to suppress strikes, Black and Indian rebellions and even mass protests by ex soldiers. Until such a day as a defeated, mutinous army allies with a renascent populist movement, makes ’despotic inroads’ on the rights of private property and expropriates the oligarchy, the American oligarchs’ power will rest secure.

7

In Defense of 1776: Towards a Concrete Position on the American Class Struggle (A Comradely Response to Paul Cockshott)

Noah Khrachvik[1]

"The history of modern, civilized America opened with one of those great, really liberating, really revolutionary wars of which there have been so few compared to the vast number of wars of conquest which, like the

1. Noah Khrachvik is the Secretary of Treasury for the American Communist Party and a Director for the Midwestern Marx Institute. He is the author of the forthcoming *Reproletarianization: The Rise and Fall of the American Middle Class (2025)*.

> *present imperialist war, were caused by squabbles among kings, landowners or capitalists over the division of usurped lands or ill-gotten gains. That was the war the American people waged against the British robbers who oppressed America and held her in colonial slavery, in the same way as these "civilized" bloodsuckers are still oppressing and holding in colonial slavery hundreds of millions of people in India, Egypt, and all parts of the world."* –VI Lenin

This is a rather obscure quote from Lenin. It isn't in any of his primary texts, or his deeper philosophical works, his polemics, etc. It is instead from an open letter that he wrote to the American proletariat in 1918,[2] an era in which the American revolutionary spirit was aflame, and the guidance of Lenin was there to answer their call. Unfortunately, it is also a letter that no one in the old American Party even remembered when I had cause to ask about it a few years ago. It is only beginning to be re-circulated now, in the 2020's, as part of the struggle against national nihilism and the fake left being carried out by the reconstituted American Communist Party. Knowing what we do about the mistakes of the New Left era and the falsification of Marxism that occurred over the previous decades, it is almost self-evident how it could have been forgotten. It doesn't even enter into his collected works until the 28th volume, either, so you can see how it takes quite a bit of digging for someone to organically come across it. One has to be a very diligent student of Lenin to go through all of the collected letters. Or maybe they just need to be as obsessive as I am about it. Who knows? Regardless, I put it here at the outset of this paper for a very important reason. And that is to show the general conclusions that the worldview of Marxism-Leninism has arrived at in its historical analysis of the American revolution of 1776. Over the last few decades, this analysis has largely been forgotten in the West, drowned out by a deluge of falsifications, distortions, and outright lies that have been proliferated through Western society, and in particular the United States of America.

Before we begin, though, I want to make one thing very clear.

A person is only as good as the information they have, the atmosphere that creates and determines their character, and the areas within that atmosphere which develop into their areas of interest and expertise. Just as we would not expect a neuroscientist to teach us how to dismantle the engine on a motorcycle,

---

2. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works Vol. 28* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 62.

or a plumber to instruct us in the correct way to set up a personal computer, we should not expect those of us involved in the class struggle to have expertise outside of the areas they focus on, and around which the vast majority of their work revolves. And just as we do not expect our co-worker who grew up watching Fox News to have a comprehensive grasp of how anti-communist propaganda works, we cannot expect any of us to have information that is not provided by the resources they have on-hand. One of the primary goals of this journal is to bring Communists together in one place to discuss and debate the important topics of the day. In this way, we can allow those who specialize in one area to help those in another and all of us can share information with each other.

Paul Cockshott is a man I've gotten to know a little over the years, due to his excellent work in the areas of mathematics and cybernetics. His work empirically disproving the so-called "economic calculation problem" that saw a strange rise to prominence during the early 2000's is essential for understanding how a new, technologically-driven Communist economy can function. I have personally learned a great deal from it. He is nothing other than a dedicated man and a shining example of Communist excellence for younger comrades to learn from - an expert in his field. Basically, I am simply trying to impress upon you, the reader, that this essay is not canceling or picking fights with anyone or anything, but instead only intending to aid the goals that we share with Comrade Cockshott through a coherent and concrete reflection of social reality as it exists within its own development. The point of contention is not between personalities, or anything approaching the petty bickering that destroyed the last period of history's so-called "left" in the USA. We simply have different areas of expertise. American history and the dialectics of abstract and concrete just happen to be mine, so it's an area in which I can help.

Simple as, as the kids say.

Do the kids still say that? Ah, who cares. Let's get on with it, shall we?

The piece by Comrade Cockshott in this journal entitled, "The American Oligarchy," lays out his views on the current nature of the American state apparatus and elaborates some historical points that he believes are what make it this way. I would like to say, first and foremost, that on the issue of whether or not we can characterize the state apparatus of the USA as a democracy ruled by the working people, or an oligarchy ruled by an alienated class of capitalists

whose interests are diametrically opposed to those of its working people, we can only wholeheartedly agree with Comrade Cockshott. It is most certainly an oligarchy. In fact, we can predict with over 90% accuracy which political "candidate" will win a given election simply by betting on the horse who received the most campaign "contributions."[3] If that isn't a clear indicator of which direction our analysis must turn in regards to understanding the class character of the American government, I don't know what is. It is only when we delve a bit deeper into how this state of affairs came about, what shaped and determined its form, and the essential nature of American society that is rumbling beneath the surface, driving its continual internal development, that problems arise. Only when we begin to make an abstraction of its most basic elementary component, the component that creates the necessity of development, and determines in large part the character of what it creates, do we see that things are not always what they appear in the directly sensuous observation of facts. This state of affairs begins with the formation of the Republic, the ousting of the British, and the embryonic form of the American people. In order to view the whole, we must understand the interconnected, mutually determining, internal components leading from there to here. Only when we put all of those pieces together correctly do we get a concrete reflection of what exists in concrete reality.

This is, of course, the Marxist method of the ascent to the concrete. So we will be going over a very truncated version of this as we go through the comrade's paper, and hopefully, in this way, we can arrive at a clearer picture of the revolutionary character of 21st century America, as well as the path forward for its working class in its fight against the oligarchy.

The paper begins with an empirical investigation that backs up the primary thesis we have already agreed with: a recent study from Princeton University that exposes the lack of actual democracy in the USA. This is the Marxist starting point, an elementary observation of the material reality on the ground as it currently exists, and it reflects conclusions long-ago arrived at through Marxist analysis. Namely, that the ruling class in this country functions for its own class, and the working masses have no real say in the policies that affect our lives. This is a great place to begin and precisely how Marx himself begins

3. Wesley Lowery, "91% of the time the better-financed candidate winds. Don't act surprised," *The Washington Post* (April 2014): https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/04/04/think-money-doesnt-matter-in-elections-this-chart-says-youre-wrong/

Capital (though, obviously with different subject matter).[4] The comrade is correct here. However, his method of analysis accidentally slips into metaphysics right after this point as he says, "It is a mistake to see the American Revolution as a bourgeois democratic one.

It was way different from great democratic revolutions like those in 18th century France or 20th century China." Honestly, slipping into metaphysics is easier than you'd think (metaphysics is, after all, how we are socialized and trained to process information in modern bourgeois society, of which we are all subjects; avoiding its grip would be like avoiding oxygen), so we aren't going to try to assign blame here or anything. Just try to investigate a bit deeper.

What the comrade is doing here, a little more precisely, is looking at multiple things that he considers to be within the same category and then abstracting characteristics within each thing away from the thing in question. He then compares these characteristics, looking for similarities. In this way, he seeks to find what is similar and dissimilar in these revolutions.

Unfortunately, when we view things in this manner, it makes whatever the thing is that we are studying static, and freezes it in time and space. Rather than figure out how these features developed, we simply remove the features we want to look at from it, and then we end up viewing the features of one abstract thing devoid of features and internal processes that create them in relation to another thing that gets its features and internal processes removed in the same manner.

We can't ever get to a concrete representation of it because of this. We've removed its component parts that are part of what makes it what it is. We're left sort of swimming in the realm of abstractions, never able to form a real, concrete picture of it in our minds as it actually exists in reality. I call this *"counting characteristics."* It's a very common mistake, and something we must consciously prevent ourselves from doing when we set out to analyze anything.

If we are to understand multiple revolutions, we must view them on another level of investigation entirely, as part of the world historical movement of

4. In their polemics against bourgeois apologists and professorial blowhards, Marx and Engels repeatedly clarified that Capital did not begin with anything other than the elementary material reality of "commodity relation". The concepts of value and everything else begin with this elementary relation.

society, and in this way in their interconnection and mutual determination of the entire process of world history, rather than as singular revolutions that are cut off from each other.

The characteristics in question are those of the American Revolution that the comrade considers essential to its nature. He compares them to the characteristics of the bourgeois democratic French Revolution of 1789 and the Chinese Communist Revolution of 1949. He then arrives at the conclusion that they are different.[5] This is correct, of course. They are different. But they are different only in form, and precisely because of this, they are similar in content when we perform our analysis on this other level of world history mentioned above.

Later on in the essay, comrade Cockshott quotes the legendary Zhou Enlai and his famous remark about the French Revolution, where he says that it is still too early to tell what its outcomes are. The comrade's mistake is made apparent to us here, as he tells us that it is not too early to tell. But this was not the level of theoretical analysis that comrade Enlai was speaking on. He was, instead, telling us that the French Revolution was part of this world historical process, and as such, it is still too early to tell what its outcomes are. We are still in the process of resolving them, and revolutions against capitalism are a vital part of that process, the effect resulting from this cause that becomes the cause of a new thing moving forward. As Carlos Garrido has written on the subject: "Enlai, as a proficient dialectician, was correct in his assessment of the French Revolution. It is still 'too soon to tell' precisely because the rational kernel, the progressive demands, of the revolution have yet to be fully realized. These find themselves unactualizable within the bourgeois form of life. They find their realization in the communist form of life, which, for most of the world, exists only implicitly/in-itself, as a hope which drives us to realize its latent potential."[6] These aspects of the concrete whole "world history" are mutually determining. Or, they are different precisely because they are similar - they are two particular, historically determined forms of the universal progress of society.

---

5. One could say that this revolution began roughly 20 years earlier, and one would not be wrong in that estimate. We are simply using this period to establish the difference in the history of the world's revolutionary process more clearly.

6. Carlos L. Garrido, " 'Too Soon to Tell': On Revolutionary Temporality," *Monthly Review Online* (April 02, 2024): https://mronline.org/2024/04/02/too-soon-to-tell-on-revolutionary-temporality/

In order to get to this conclusion, that they are different precisely because they are the same, we must view each revolution not in comparison to the characteristics of some other revolution, but in comparison to itself. We cannot count characteristics. We must, instead, look at the thing in question in relation to itself, and begin our abstraction-making at its most basic point of necessity, finding that relation within it that must overcome its own internal contradiction and drive the development of that thing forward. This can then become part of the same process on a larger scale. Or, in order to understand the abstract moments of development within society as a whole, we must go through this process in smaller scale as regards each revolutionary moment of development, consciously developing a theory of their interconnection as part of the larger process of world history.

In *Capital*, Marx does this with bourgeois society in general through finding that exact point in its most developed form to date. From there, he must look at the internally, mutually determining aspects that must lead to its development into what it is at the moment he sees it in sensual observation. In this way, Marx builds up an interconnected set of abstractions that describe the necessity of each next point and its mutually determining character with the point previous, and he creates a concrete whole concept, a reflection of what exists in reality as it exists, discovering its internal laws of development. Lenin does this same thing in relation to the continual development of capitalism past the industrial stage and into the imperialist stage, expertly applying this more developmentally-oriented form of logic. If he had instead compared characteristics, his conclusions would have led him to understanding some of the many problems within the Russia of his day, but not to their solutions, just as Comrade Cockshott can arrive at the problem of oligarchy, but cannot arrive at the essential process of development towards a new era and the necessity of the overthrow of the British Empire and establishment of the American Republic as laying the groundwork for the American class struggle as a mutually interdependent outcome of the same process.

In 1954, William Z. Foster's *The Negro People in American History* goes through this form of analysis in regards to the subject at hand: the bourgeois revolution of 1776. We can see a few of the necessary outcomes produced by differences in method here. In this account, Foster calls this revolution, "a bourgeois revolution with strong democratic currents within it," for instance - because he is comparing this particular revolution to itself and the necessity of

its development as that particular form of revolutionary transition.[7] He elaborates from there, characterizing 1776 specifically as an anti-colonial revolution; the necessity of the embryonic American bourgeoisie's development of capitalism coming into contradiction with the older capitalism of the British Empire. The necessity of development within this younger capitalism necessitated the ousting of the British occupier and the establishment of the first ever bourgeois Republic.

This anti-colonial angle is a common one in Marxist-Leninist analysis, and from everything I have read, seems to be the consensus of Eastern Marxism. It was the view held by Herbert Aptheker, the preeminent American communist historian of the 20th century, in his text, *The American Revolution*.[8] It is only in the post-Cold War West, where we are subject to so many distortions, and where we have so many facts hidden from us, that a view of a so-called "counter-revolution" has developed and the British Empire/King George III have been painted as somehow progressive. But we'll get to that shortly.

Foster wrote another account of this revolution as well, coming from another angle. Three years previous to *The Negro People in American History*, he published *Outline Political History of the Americas*, which has a much broader scope of examination. In this one, he characterizes 1776 as the primary revolution within a set of "hemispheric revolutions," and puts it in a place of prominence amongst the world's historical revolutions against feudalism.[9] It's important to note that the theory of hemispheric revolutions is an abstract component of what creates the Marxist view of the entire world's history. So, Foster has three levels of analysis here. In order to develop a concrete view of world history, he must abstract the hemispheric revolutions and their processes from it, and perform the same sort of analysis in order to get that component. In doing so, he must do the same for the American Revolution of 1776 on a third level. All of these are interconnected components of the overall analysis.

Before moving on to some of the distortions that are necessarily all around us by simply being in "the West," we must examine one other opening line from Comrade Cockshott. It's at this time that he comes out of metaphysical analysis

---

7. William Z. Foster, *The Negro People in American History* (New York: International Publishers, 1954), 43.

8. Herbert Aptheker, *The American Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1960), 23.

9. William Z. Foster, *Outline Political History of the Americas* (New York: International Publishers, 1951),121.

and into a more dialectical or developmental view. Unfortunately, he's missing some of the facts, and so we will try to elaborate on those in order to get a more accurate picture of the modern American oligarchy as we create that concrete reflection we mentioned.

As the comrade elaborates his point about the oligarchical character of the American state apparatus, he says that this information comes as no surprise to Marxists. In his own words:

> *"This is what they [Marxists - NK] had been saying since the mid 19th century "the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." Here was scientific confirmation of what they had always said. But how does this work?"*
> *"How are the rich able to so completely dominate a state whose constitution is supposed to be democratic? The short answer is that the US constitution was never intended to be democratic. The long answer involves looking at the economic and class history of the USA to see how its politics has operated."*

This is all correct, of course. But the comrade is forgetting that Marx and Engels considered the development of bourgeois states to be an incredibly progressive, revolutionary moment in world history. They considered the American anti-colonial revolution in particular to be revolutionary, in fact, and believed it created very ripe conditions for the progress of humanity past the bourgeois epoch. Engels, in the forward to the American edition of *Conditions of the Working Class in England,* for instance, describes how quickly American class consciousness was developing during his time without the burdens imposed upon her by European feudalism, calling the soil of America "more favored" for proletarian revolution.[10] Marx, in his famous letter to Abraham Lincoln after the victory of the second American Revolution at the end of the Civil War, writes that the working class of Europe look to the star-spangled banner (American flag) as their future.[11]

---

10. Friedrich Engels, *The Conditions of the Working Class in England in 1844* (New York: John W. Lovell Comp, 1887), 11.

11. Karl Marx, "Address of the International Working Men's Association to Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America Presented to U.S. Ambassador Charles Francis Adams

But these are just the feelings of Marx and Engels. We don't really have the space here to go over the analysis that led them to these views. Instead, I want to focus on the area in which Comrade Cockshott speaks of the American Constitution and its anti-democratic nature. We must compare this constitution not to the Constitution of some obviously more advanced country, such as People's China, or even one of a similar level of development that we view as more advanced, such as the French Republic, but to the conditions it arose from, and what necessitated its development, as we do everything else. In order to really get that concrete view of how it developed into what it is, we can't even compare it to older forms of social documents, such as that of the Roman Republic (which is the route the comrade takes). We must, instead, compare it to itself, and the internal processes leading to its development. What contradictions did its existence seek to overcome, and how were they overcome? Those are the questions we must ask.

The American Constitution is the document that directly followed the famous Declaration of Independence. It was the founding document which established the formal law of the land for the first bourgeois Republic, and it was written as a consolidation of often contradictory forces within the American British Colonies (now considering themselves independent) that organized them into a Republic of federated States. Its democratic nature, or the parts of it that are based in the notions we refer to as "Jeffersonian democracy" were already in conflict with more authoritarian views of the day. But before we get into the internal contradictions of the American Republic, Comrade Cockshott tells us a bit about the Sons of Liberty and their particular leadership, saying, "The leadership consisted of men of influence and standing, perhaps the most conservative leadership of any revolution in history."

While certainly, the leadership consisted of men of influence and standing, I don't think we can call the first anti-colonial revolution in modern history 'the most conservative' if we are analyzing this revolution in relation to itself, and its own context, rather than in relation to, say, the October Revolution, or our modern times now. In order to understand if this revolution and its leadership was 'the most conservative' or a genuinely progressive and revolutionary force, it must be placed into its proper context, and we must understand the conditions that gave rise to it. It is in doing this, that we must add some factual corrections to our investigation.

January 28, 1865," *Marxist Internet Archive*: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/iwma/documents/1864/lincoln-letter.htm

Certainly, the Sons of Liberty, including their primary and more radical theorists, Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine, were of the opinion that their class was the only class qualified to lead a nation. They even write of aristocracy. Thomas Jefferson, specifically, however, qualifies this, creating a progressive, or even revolutionary version of aristocracy, and this is part of why Foster speaks of the prominence of these revolutionaries in the overthrow of feudal absolutism. Now, at first glance, the phrase "progressive, or even revolutionary version of aristocracy" would make little sense. That is, if we abstract the phrase from its place in concrete reality, and how the notion developed, it would be a simple contradiction in terms, an oxymoron, for bourgeois revolutionaries to call for aristocracy. But as we add the context it was developing out of, we will see that it was precisely this: a revolutionary form of aristocracy.

Jefferson, the founder of the populist *Democratic-Republican Party* (which is the precursor to our modern Republican Party), considered the will of the people to be naturally represented within a concept he named the "natural aristocracy" in 1813 while in correspondence with John Adams, a political rival and friend.[12] This "natural aristocracy" was composed not of those with the "proper" blood lines and land holdings that were attached to those blood lines, but instead the naturally meritorious members of society, those who proved their virtue and talents through the actions leading up to their taking leading roles within society and acquisition of property. He counter-posed this against what he called the "artificial aristocracy" of feudalism, where only those who had the correct blood lines were considered meritorious, virtuous, and talented enough to lead. In fact, one of the questions that often vexed Jefferson (due to the limitations of how society had developed up until this point, the idealist philosophy of John Locke, etc.) was how to prevent such a thing from arising. His notion of limiting inheritance to a single-family house was one solution he came up with that shows us how progressive he was for the era. This was an incredibly radical idea in the early 19th century. And this is only one example.

This is why I went to such lengths to explain the importance of the analysis of a given revolution within itself, rather than compared to some other revolution. In order to understand whether or not 1776 was progressive, it must be put in its proper context, understood from the contradictions that it overcame as it arose, and what contradictions that created going forward. We cannot expect

12. Thomas Jefferson. "Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 28 October 1813." *Founders Online*: https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-06-02-0446

bourgeois revolutionaries of 1776 to be Communist revolutionaries of the 21st century, after all. An industrial proletariat would not come about in the American Republic until well after that point. The material premise for our existence simply wasn't there yet. There was still so much that had not yet developed that the Jeffersonian notions of localized democracy and yeoman farmers, small holdings, and what later Marxists would refer to as a petty bourgeois nation still seemed likely to him. It takes the social relations caused by the rise of industrial capitalism and the necessity of the robber barons to begin their domination of the entire country for the horrors of Western expansion to begin, and the revolutionary potential of the proletariat to develop.

The comrade does set up such a framework of examination, of course. He tells us that we must use the methods Mao used to analyze society, the categories that the great Chinese Communist spells out in his famous essay, *On Contradiction*, in order to arrive at a solution. This is all well and good, and we must agree that Mao's categories are very good for understanding the mutually determining aspects within any social change. But we must at the same time stress that the framework Mao lays out in *On Contradiction* must be used in its entirety, with each inter-related piece affecting the others. We must understand what leads to what and mutually determines what, or our answers will not properly reflect reality as it exists. Above all, we must understand the categories he calls the universality of contradiction and the particularity of contradiction, and on which level our analysis rests at a given moment. This is why we made such a fuss over it at the beginning of this essay. When we mix these up, or we don't have all the empirical facts relevant to understanding a given level of analysis, we can end up with a skewed view of the overall situation, and this is precisely the mistake in the comrade's paper.

He tells us, "During the revolution, the fundamental contradiction was between the slave owning class of the colonies on one side, and the British state and four Iroquois Nations on the other." Now, to be fair to the situation as the comrade sees it, this is not the only thing he says about it, only my distillation of its major premise so that we can point to the historical facts we must add in order to arrive at a more concrete reflection of the revolution. If we are to go from this characterization of the situation in 1776, however, it would seem to us that the Sons of Liberty were bent on chattel slavery and the destruction of existing nations within the land mass they were on in order to expand and have room to make profits from that slavery. These Iroquois tribes would be defending their property alongside those who have similar interests in the British Empire, who

were a progressive force in the situation. But in doing so, we would be freezing things in time and counting characteristics again. If we take a more developmental view of how the contradiction between the British Empire and its American colonies develops into what it became in 1776, then we can see how it is impossible to agree with the comrade's above assessment.

First and foremost: it was the British Empire that set up the institution of chattel slavery to begin with, and the writings of the Founding Fathers make it very clear that they held King George III and the British Empire directly responsible for forcing this barbaric institution on the colonies, and for setting it up as the backbone of the entire world's economy. In fact, in the original draft of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson rails against King George III for this very thing, saying he was, "waging cruel war against human nature itself."[13]

When we frame things as "the slave owning classes of the colonies on one side, and the British state and four Iroquois Nations on the other," we are also missing the fact that such a thing as a slave-owning class simply did not exist. Beyond chattel slave owners being a minority of the bourgeois revolutionaries (and one the abolitionists would struggle very hard against within the internal contradictions of the revolution), Marx himself outlines this specifically as a bourgeois form of slavery in *Capital*, and W.E.B. Dubois, the father of American Marxism, goes into detail on its functions in *Black Reconstruction in America,* giving us the all-important category of the enslaved black proletariat as a particular, historically determined form of the proletariat, being used by a particular, historically determined form of bourgeoisie in service of the creation of surplus value in this time and place. This aspect of the situation is essential to understand if we are to apply Mao's categories - not just principle and secondary contradictions, but the universality and particularity of contradiction.

What have, instead of a slave-owning class, was the embryonic bourgeoisie of the USA struggling against the stifling of the British Empire in its development of capitalism. No more, no less. That is, on the one hand. On the other, the class contradictions within the Republic were already developing, as the comrade points out. Though, it is quite a bit more complicated and internally contradictory than the analysis Comrade Cockshott gives us would lead us to

13. Thomas Jefferson. "Transcript of the Rough Draft of the Declaration." *Thomas Jefferson's Monticello*: https://www.monticello.org/thomas-jefferson/jefferson-s-three-greatest-achievements/the-declaration/transcript-of-the-rough-of-the-declaration/

believe. As Jefferson was the primary theoretical mind of the Revolution, and he was very much both an owner of chattel slaves and staunch abolitionist, I believe we should once more go to his views on the subject, to further demonstrate the complications and contradictions inherent within such a thing as an abolitionist owner of slaves. Of the institution itself, Jefferson wrote, "But, as it is, we have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other."[14] He also wrote that he prayed for the absence of a just God, because his own participation in the institution would damn the souls of himself, his sons, and his entire family for eternity if that were the case.

But we are not here to make an apology for the internal contradictions of the American Founding Fathers. Only to express that the British Empire, having erected the institution of chattel slavery, fought for its continuation even after they outlawed the use of human beings as property on the island of England itself, and spent incredible effort to increase the slave trade in other colonies. In fact, it was chattel slavery that laid the economic foundation for the entire international system of world capitalism and laid the groundwork for the industrial era to begin. People speak of the spinning jenny and such inventions, but it was the profits derived from this bourgeois form of slavery's main primary raw material, cotton, that made the entire British Empire's textile sector possible, and formed the backbone of world trade. The Brits even almost entered the American Civil War on behalf of the southern slave owners, in fact, and most likely would have without the intervention of the organized British proletariat. The basic understanding of the Sons of Liberty was that the practice would die out of its own accord once they were able to outlaw the slave trade in all of the American states. Of course, they were wrong about this fact, and it took a second revolution to accomplish this, but it is evident in all writing on the subject at the time. In fact, there are zero parts of the prolific writings of the Founding Fathers that talk about the need to continue chattel slavery. Which makes sense when we begin looking into the individuals who made up the theoretical and practical leadership, most of whom (including Jefferson, as ironic as that sounds, I know) were staunch abolitionists. Benjamin Franklin, in fact, founded the first-ever abolitionist newspaper in the country.

The comrade does give us one point to back up the narrative that runs through the rest of the paper, in the Proclamation of Lord Dunmore at the beginning of

14. Thomas Jefferson. "Extract from Thomas Jefferson to John Holmes." *Thomas Jefferson's Monticello.* (April 20, 2020): https://tjrs.monticello.org/letter/377

the Revolution. This Proclamation basically offered freedom to any slave who agreed to fight against the Patriots for the British crown. It was not, however, nodding towards the British abolition of slavery as an institution or the end of the slave trade as such. And the Patriots did the same thing. I consider this something of a wash – a tactical necessity for both sides. But let's go once more to Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence, which addresses the British Empire's attempts to incite slave rebellions against the Patriots.

> *"He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sacred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. this piratical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the CHRISTIAN king of Great Britain. determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought & sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce: and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them, & murdering the people upon whom he also obtruded them; thus paying off former crimes committed against the liberties of one people, with crimes which he urges them to commit against the lives of another."*

This makes it quite obvious how nuanced the views of the Sons of Liberty were on the subject. Jefferson maintained that the Southern colonies would not sign on to the fight against the crown without removal of this section, however, and so he removed it in the final version. The basic history of the slave-owning plantation bourgeoisie of the South would tend to confirm this statement, as they shared both economic ties and cultural affinity with England until the second American revolution crushed their power and threw down the institution for good.

All revolutions are practical affairs, at the end of the day, and not won or lost through noble sentiments. They are won and lost based in defeating the primary enemy and winning the primary struggle, overcoming the principal contradiction of the situation, a contradiction that is historically determined, and which drives forward the development of society itself. Just as Mao was

able to, in one context, understand the struggle against Japanese imperialism as the principal contradiction, so too must we see the need to overthrow the yolk of British colonialism in 1776 as the principal contradiction the American revolutionaries faced. In regards to 1776, this can be nothing other than the removal of the fetters the older British capitalism had put upon the embryonic American capitalism, freeing it to become nothing other than a capitalist Republic.

The comrade continues past this point, of course, creating his view of the secondary and tertiary contradictions within the USA. He says, “The fundamental contradiction governed the development of the secondary ones: between slave and slave owner, between landlord and tenant farmer. Because their direct oppressors were opposed to the British, slaves and tenant farmers tended to side with the British against the revolution. There was widespread loyalist (pro British) sentiment among the tenantry.”

Unfortunately, if we are to use Mao’s categories, the fundamental, or principal contradiction was not that of a contradiction between a “slave owning class” on one side and “the British state and four Iroquois nations on the other,” as we show above. It was, instead, as Lenin told us, “... the war the American people waged against the British robbers who oppressed America and held her in colonial slavery.” Or a little less poetically, the embryonic American bourgeois struggling against the older British capitalism that was stifling its development.

This is not to say, however, that chattel slavery would play no role in the historical development of the American class struggle. In fact, it plays a very dominant role, as it is the social relations created by chattel slavery that create the black freedom movement, which is the form the universal contradiction of class struggle has taken on in particular to these conditions, and what led to not just the second American revolution at the end of the Civil War so expertly described by Dubois in *Black Reconstruction*, but to the political revolution we often refer to as the Civil Rights Movement, creating a new form of social reproduction once again through the overthrow of Jim Crow.

Comrade Cockshott takes some time to explain the lack of genuine democracy in the USA during the next section of the paper, and with this and his historical points in this regard, we most whole-heartedly agree. He bases this on a comparison of characteristics of the Roman Republic, however, the problems with which we have already addressed above. But we should still remain clear:

this was not the constitution of a proletarian revolution. It was impossible for the American bourgeois revolutionaries to institute democracy in any genuine sense of the word as explained in the passage from our comrade Carlos Garrido above. In fact, even the Founding Fathers of the Federalist faction were forced to assuage the fears of the big landholders of the day in the Federalist Papers. In Federalist number ten, Madison does this in reference to the fears of political democracy (or what we sometimes call formal or bourgeois democracy), saying that the property-owning classes had no fear of the "leveling" impulses of the landless proletariat specifically because of the inherent factions within society. It has been the job of these propertied classes to exacerbate those factions, and they have excelled at it to this very day - basing such actions on race, on religion, on gender, and on and on. Again, we must stress that the anti-colonial nature of the 1776 revolution could lead only to such a thing, due to the limitations of the conditions that drove its development.

Comrade Cockshott ends the paper by agreeing with something Lenin said, another area in which we can at least mostly agree. He says, "It is now certain that as long as the US retains its current constitution, the oligarchy there need have no fear of democracy. In the USA radical popular leaders from Lincoln to King had the delusion that the republic was democratic. I would tend to side with Lenin who wrote that a US type republic was the most perfect form of rule by the propertied classes."

I would add only two things here. First, that Lincoln and King were under no delusions about the victory of democracy being a struggle they were both engaged in. We do not have the space to get into such things here, but I would urge anyone interested in the view of Lincoln to refer to his Gettysburg Address for their answer, and anyone interested in the Hegelian dialectical theory of King to look into the many collections of his essays and speeches. And second, I would another reference to Lenin, who famously said a few things on the subject. He said, "Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich - that is the democracy of capitalist society," in *The State and Revolution*, by which he meant that the democracy of any society is and can only be the democracy of the ruling class.[15] This is something comrade Cockshott also explains early on in his paper, where he quotes Marx.

I would also like to add another reference to democracy and how to discern its essential content that Lenin made. In the section of his famous polemic *The*

15. Vladimir Lenin. *The State and Revolution.* Progress Publishers. 1969., 80

Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky that explains how Kautsky tried to turn Marx into a common liberal, he chastizes Kautsky for speaking like a liberal, of "democracy in general," explaining how a Marxist will never forget to ask for which class this democracy exists.

Our bourgeois revolutionaries were liberals, in the truest sense of the word. They could, of course, speak of democracy in general. But we Marxists, we must never forget to ask, "for which class?" because it is this question's answer which determines the aim of our modern struggles, and guides us in our actions of the day. We can forgive the liberals in the pre-Marxist era for their lack of understanding the objectivity of class struggle. What we cannot forgive, and will never forgive, are the actions of liberals in the modern day, who try to blind and distract us the way Kautsky did, who carry water for genocidal monsters and warmongers, and who seek to stop the advance of working class democracy through notions of "democracy in general" and other betrayals that would subsume the power of the working class to that of the war-mongers and monsters.

After all, the progress of the USA did not end at the ousting of the British Empire and the defeat of King George III. It only overcame one primary contradiction that laid the material basis for the contradictions to follow it. Without the anti-colonial revolution of 1776, the black proletariat never would have been formed in the way it was, and never would have forced the entire nation to settle the question of abolition once and for all. We never would have seen the first dictatorship of the proletariat in history during Reconstruction. We also never would have seen the rise of the industrial proletariat that is the direct outcome of the formation of the bourgeois state, which is the material basis for proletarian revolution. American capitalism would not have produced the middle class that arose during the mid-20th-century from its struggle, meaning that the middle class would not be decaying and dying away in our own era, producing the revolutionary potential of the re-proletariat.

But all of that, as I'm rather fond of saying, is a whole nother bag of bananas. A story for another time. For the moment, we will close with a thank you to comrade Cockshott and a tribute once again to the great VI Lenin, whose quote we will repeat here.

It is natural for a liberal to speak of "democracy" in general; but a Marxist will never forget to ask: "for what class?

I think that we all can agree on this, if nothing else:

It is time for democracy for *our* class.

8

The Ringing Call of The Gallic Cock: On Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right

Thomas Riggins[1]

This article aims to reprise Marx's 1844 article on Hegel's philosophy of law which ends with the memorable prediction that the Germans will only become conscious of their revolutionary destiny when they respond to the “the ringing

---

1. Thomas Riggins is a retired Philosophy Professor (NYU, The New School of Social Research, among others) who received a PhD from the CUNY Graduate Center (1983). He has been active in the civil rights and peace movements since the 1960s when he was chairman of the Young People’s Socialist League at Florida State University and also worked for CORE in voter registration in north Florida (Leon County). He has written for many online publications such as People’s World and Political Affairs, where he was an associate editor. He also served on the board of the Bertrand Russell Society and was president of the Corliss Lamont chapter in New York City of the American Humanist Association. He works as a Counseling Director at the Midwestern Marx Institute and is the author of Reading the Classical Texts of Marxism, *Eurocommunism: A Critical Reading of Santiago Carrillo* and *Eurocommunist Revisionism*, and many other books.

call of the Gallic cock." Well, the last time the Gallic cock was heard from was in 1968 and it was rather subdued compared to its noisy past (1789, 1830, 1848, 1871).

Fortunately for those who read this pre-*Communist Manifesto* work of the young Marx (he was 25 when he wrote it) it has many useful ideas packed into its 13 pages that are still of interest today even though no one is expecting the Gallic cock to make any ringing calls in the foreseeable future. Its greatest call remains that of 1789 which inspired the Russian, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese Revolutions as well as the Cuban and which is echoed today in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Now for Marx's ideas and how they relate to today's struggles. There are revolutionary movements at work in the contemporary world and some of the ideas expressed by Marx in relation to the French and German movements of the early nineteenth century can be applied to them. There are three areas where revolutionary ferment is currently occurring-- the Middle East and Africa where we see revolutions and counter revolutions breaking out in several different countries, Latin America where several countries are now led by pro socialist and/or progressive governments inspired by the Cuban revolution and threatened by US imperialism, and in south east Asia where both India and Nepal have active revolutionary movements based on exploited peasants and indigenous peoples.

This essay by Marx ("Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction") maintains that the fight to improve the world involves a fight to criticize religion since we will not be able to focus on the real world and its problems if we spend our time engaged with a false world such as the one conjured up by religion. This essay by Marx is admittedly dated but still of some interest today.

This work is justly famous as the source of the quote that "religion is the opium of the people." While opium may be able to supply some relief from an intolerable reality, we can't expect people doped up on opium, spiritual or otherwise, to be involved in schemes for rationally based world improvement. We will get to the full quote in a minute. First, I want to note that in 1844 Marx thinks the basis of all criticism of the basic world order is the criticism of religion and that in his day this criticism has basically been completed-- at least

in western Europe (Germany in particular). “Man makes religion, religion does not make man.”

Marx is right of course for the Western world in general and large parts of Asia (China, Vietnam) religion is no longer a major factor in people's lives (except in a *pro forma* sense or within fringe groups or in backward areas). Unfortunately, this battle has not yet been won, or even joined, in large areas of the Third World. Religion thrives on oppression and only by simultaneously fighting oppression, and furthering progressive education, will religion wither and the people flourish. The following is Marx's full quote on this issue:

> *Religion “is the fantastic realization of the human essence because the human essence has no true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly a fight against the world of which religion is the spiritual aroma.”*
>
> *He continues: “Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and also the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people.”*
>
> *Finally, he says: “To abolish religion as the illusory happiness of the people is to demand their real happiness. The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions. The criticism of religion is therefore in embryo the criticism of the vale of tears, the halo of which is religion.”*

These three quotes form the basis of the materialist outlook on religion. But what is the difference between illusory happiness and real happiness? If a person is experiencing “happiness” what more is there to say? If we take an example from current history and say that the members of the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt, being at heart members of a religious organization, are living in an illusory world and the Egyptian people demanding their removal from power was an example of the demand to abandon illusions about the nature of the problems facing Egypt and the existing state of affairs then, it would seem, the only justification for this action would be to revolutionize the state of affairs (i.e., the social, economic, and political status quo) to such an extent that religious illusions would no longer have any traction in that society.

But who is to decide who is delusional? In the first place, rather than speaking of illusory versus real happiness, it would be better to speak of a feeling of happiness based on a false belief about the nature of reality and one based on a true belief about the nature of reality. You may feel (temporarily) happy taking your laetrile for that lump, but you would be better off having it removed.

As for who decides, Marx was very specific (in 1844) as to whom this responsibility devolves. It is the role of philosophy in service to history. We will have to allow Marx to use this Hegelian way of expressing himself: while critical of Hegel he had not yet completely liberated himself from Hegelian ways of expressing his ideas. He says: "The task of history, therefore, once the world beyond the truth has disappeared, is to establish the truth of this world. The immediate task of philosophy, which is at the service of history, once the holy form of human self-estrangement has been unmasked, is to unmask self-estrangement in its unholy forms. Thus, the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics."

Marx may have thought this battle was over in the Germany of his day, but it is still raging here in the USA: one only has to read the statements made by certain right-wing US politicians to see how retrograde religious references are put forth to justify reactionary social policies. And it is not just in the United States. Every day you can read in the papers how all over the planet religion is used to crush the human spirit, attack enlightenment, retard scientific understanding and further the goals of fascism, militarism, and imperialism. Although they are an important influence, all the religious progressives and pacifists in the world will not stem this backward tide of religious fanaticism without robust movements and political parties that are able to rally millions of oppressed people to fight against it.

Behind the religious facade stands a more this-worldly enemy. Marx writes that once the other worldly illusion has been mastered, we must focus on the reality of this world and the real roots of oppression and human self-estrangement. "The relation of industry, of the world of wealth generally, to the political world is one of the major problems of modern times." A 170 years isn't so long after all as our world today faces exactly this problem – from the Koch brothers, to big investment firms like Blackrock, Vanguard, and State Street, to big oil companies and the military industrial complex, to the economic crisis and the war against working people, to the world wide faltering of capitalism based on

domination by banks and financial institutions, and third world exploitation – it is all based on struggle over which countries and which classes are going to control industry and the world of wealth.

As this struggle intensifies, we can expect the world to become a more and more violent place. The past century may have been only a prelude of things to come. We read in the papers that Japan plans to rebuild its military, the US is building up its forces in the Pacific (aimed at China) and moving into Africa, NATO is carrying on wars of aggression far from its home bases and preparing for interventions anywhere that may threaten Western dominance. Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Honduras, Haiti, Libya, Egypt, Syria (to name just a few of the most recent examples) no country is safe from Western intrigue, drones, outside interventions, or externally manipulated civil wars whenever the economic interests of the US and its allies and puppets are seen to be at risk. Today we see the US wage a proxy war against Russia, stemming from the US backed overthrow of the elected Ukrainian government in 2014 and the advance of NATO to the Russian borders.

Marx realized that journalism alone, philosophy and criticism alone, would never be able to change this situation or be able to overthrow the world system of human exploitation. "The weapon of criticism cannot, of course," he wrote, "replace criticism by weapons, material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses." This is why Wiki-Leaks and people like Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden, Jackson Hinkle, the Midwestern Marx Institute, the Infrared Collective, along with other whistleblowers and investigative reporters must be silenced, for governments and their toadies know that once the people are informed, once they realize that the theories of their own governments are that information and democracy must be restricted (fascist policies introduced) in order for them to carry out their repressive domestic and international policies, they will fight back (or so they think) to ensure their rights and livelihoods.

A revolution in thought must precede a revolution in deed. Marx thinks there must be a material basis for any revolution. "Theory can be realized in a people only insofar as it is the realization of the needs of that people." People around the world are becoming more and more aware of their real needs which are the exact opposite of those they are told about by capitalist governments and their hand kissing mainstream media. They need jobs, peace, education, housing and

clean air and political parties and movements that truly represent working people and their allies, not bombs, drones, military interventions, no fly zones, fossil fuels, austerity and bank bailouts, and capitalist and fake socialist and labor parties that betray them.

A political revolution, such as we saw in the early 2010s in Egypt or Tunisia, was only a partial revolution.[2] Marx's thinking here is conditioned by the experiences of 1789 and 1830 in France. What are these partial revolutions based upon Marx asks [a complete revolution would change the social relations and economic base of a country – 1789 rather than 1830 – or even 1776.] His answer is that a "part of civil society emancipates itself and attains general domination; on the fact that a definite class, proceeding from its particular situation, undertakes the general emancipation of society."

In Egypt in 2011, for example, it was the middle class in alliance with the workers and peasants and some elements of the big national capitalists against the military dictatorship headed by Mubarak and representing comprador capitalists in alliance with US imperialism and its puppets (e.g., the EU).

> *"No class of civil society can play this role," Marx says, "without arousing a moment of enthusiasm in itself and in the masses, a moment in which it fraternizes and merges with society in general, becomes confused with it and is perceived and acknowledged as its general representative; a moment in which its demands and rights are truly the rights and demands of society itself; a moment in which it is truly the social head and social heart."*

It was Mohammed Morsi, and the political party affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood that emerged in 2012 as the general representative of the forces that brought down Mubarak – it claimed to represent the incarnation of the most general (and contentless as it turned out) demand of the revolution: "Democracy" as incarnated in free and fair elections. Unfortunately for the Brotherhood its anti-democratic and dogmatic nature soon came to the fore as it tried to impose its sectarian doctrines on the rest of the revolutionary

---

2. It must also be remembered the role that imperialist outfits like the NED and others played in the so-called "Arab Spring," especially in countries like Syria and Libya, which upheld a form of Islamic "socialism."

movement, of which it was only one component, while relying on the military to maintain it in power.

This is why a mere political revolution is only partial. In Egypt one “tyrant” was removed from power, and a would-be tyrant was also expelled from office – both by the Egyptian military reacting to millions of people in the streets demanding rights and freedoms which are the norm in stable bourgeois democracies. The real rulers in Egypt remain the military, and the economic and social relations remain the same. To what extent they will allow bourgeois democracy to take hold in Egypt remains to be seen. One thing we can count on is that all the forces of US imperialism will be marshaled against the Egyptian masses and their democratic aspirations, the current US supported military dictatorship is proof of this.

Marx, in this essay, thought a complete revolution would have to be led by a class whose emancipation would free both itself and all other classes – by abolishing class differences. Of course, he is talking about 1844 Germany and the working class was very small and just beginning to develop so any coming revolutions would be bourgeois democratic in nature and not socialist. Yet Marx thought that only a full-fledged socialist revolution, one demanding the abolition of private property, would actually be able to free human beings from exploitation and oppression.

What then does Marx think will replace religion as the moving force in advancing historical progress. He said it would be philosophy. In his days what we call science was more or less considered a part of philosophy – natural philosophy. So, if we think of Marx as thinking that the road to liberation will be guided by a materialist philosophy based on scientific understanding we will not be misguided. The section of humanity that will traverse this road is that of the working people, including agricultural workers, and especially industrial workers who will finally be able to put the economic resources of the planet, the common property of all not the few, to work for the common good.

This day will come, following Marx, when scientific philosophy finds its material weapons in the working people and they find their spiritual weapons in scientific philosophy. But whether it will be the Gallic cock or some other whose ringing call proclaims this day remains to be seen.

9

The Theoretical Framework of Digital Socialism Abroad: Foundational Logic[1]

Zhang Zhongyuan[2] & Xiao Guangpan[3][4]

The digital age has arrived, and with it the continual advancement of internet infrastructure and information technology. The entire history and future of

---

1. This article is a milestone achievement of the "Major Project" Commissioned by the Ministry of Education's Research Initiative for Ideological and Political Theory Teachers in Higher Education, entitled *Research on the Excavation and Application of Chinese Traditional Cultural Resources in the "Four Confidences" Education Across Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education* (23SZKJFZ04).

2. **Zhang Zhongyuan (张忠源)**, PhD in Marxist Studies from Lanzhou University, Vice President of the Gansu Rural Development Promotion Association. His primary research focuses on Marxist theory and issues related to Chinese agriculture and rural development. **Contact Information**: Tel: 13919158303; Email: zhangzhongyuan@petalmail.com.

3. **Xiao Guangpan (肖光畔)**, Master of History from Peking University, Director of the Social Affairs Promotion Office at the Gansu Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. His primary research focuses on Marxist theory and issues related to Chinese agriculture and rural development.

4. Special thanks to Zhong Xiangyu for translating this article from Chinese into English for the first time and to Danny Shaw, Noah Khrachvik, and Grayson Walker for editing.

human civilization has converged into the present space of virtual reality, where the masses are unconsciously constructing a metaverse. Powered by digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, high-speed networks, and distributed terminals, big data platforms have enabled the automated collection and analysis of data, delivering real-time and increasingly precise decision-making schemes for big tech companies. These companies now dominate international capital, mass media, finance, consumer markets, and everyday life, achieving a form of super-imperialistic control over the global economy, politics, and culture. The ultimate goal remains to systematically drive capital accumulation.

According to the logic of free markets under capitalism, the conversion of both material and immaterial resources digital capital is inevitable, leading to maximum aggregation and concentration, thereby facilitating digital planning. The tangible outcomes of this include the invasion of privacy, a relative surplus of labor, and the polarization of society – hallmarks of capitalism's acceleration in the post-colonial era. While right-wing elites celebrate the digital economy's revival of capitalism, left-wing intellectuals recognize the potential for socialist central planning to be realized through advanced digital technologies, thus surpassing capitalism's market logic and pricing system.

The debate over digital planning inherits the century-old dispute over economic calculation, becoming one of the central issues in contemporary political economy. Although mainstream discourse has been dominated by neoliberal schools of thought, this domination has not—and cannot—prevent digital socialism from emerging as a solution to the contradictions of modern capitalism.

1. The Problem of Socialist Economic Calculation

According to Karl Marx, social contradictions have increasingly crystallized into the opposition between two classes since Western history entered the modern era, with the ideological conflict between capitalism and socialism ever-present. In terms of economic history, the First World War marked a significant turning point.[5] The wartime economy provided socialists with a

5. Friedrich Asschenfeldt and Max Trecker, *Europe-Asia Studies* 76(1) (2023): 10-28. doi:10.1080/09668136.2023.2259635.

model for future economic organization, sparking a protracted debate in Western political economy about the problem of socialist economic calculation. The core issue of this debate was whether and how central planning could be possible and feasible under a socialist system. Ultimately, the discussion underscored the importance of digital technologies—such as supercomputers, big data centers, and artificial intelligence—as the material foundation for achieving socialism. This debate has profoundly impacted the development of century-old political economic theory, with the advent of digital technologies now making socialist planned economy a valid proposition in the digital age.

A. Skepticism: The Logic of Negation in the Austrian School of Economics

From the victory of the October Revolution to the implementation of the Five-Year Plans, the revolutionary achievements of Soviet Russia greatly inspired the socialist visions among left-wing European scientists, while also provoking anti-socialist narratives from right-wing economists. Around 1919, Austrian scientific philosopher Otto Neurath actively promoted the establishment of central planning institutions aiming to embody the collective will of the people, which would function in correspondence with social organizational systems. He proposed appointing "social engineers" to formulate future development plans based on universal statistics and in-kind accounting, aiming to comprehensively guide the processes of social production and historical development. Neurath sought to replace the anarchic market mechanisms driven by money and their price systems with planning, thereby creating a new order of life rooted in justice for all and where all technological achievements and means of production would directly enhance the well-being of the people rather than merely increasing capital profits.[6]

In 1920, Austrian economist Ludwig Mises published an article titled "Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth," written from the perspective of the so-called "entrepreneur" and advocating for laissez-faire market principles. He emphasized that exchange value has clear advantages over use value, labor value, and other non-economical social values. He argued

6. Otto Neurath, eds. Marie Neurath and Robert S. Cohen, *Empiricism and Sociology* (Boston and Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1973), 123-156.

that abandoning private property, free markets, monetary pricing, and other essential means of economic calculation would effectively eliminate the natural processes of price formation and resource allocation. Consequently, he asserted that dynamic expenditures and revenues, as well as production and distribution within the economy, would fail to achieve equilibrium, leading him to conclude that socialism is fundamentally and practically "impossible."[7]

Mises subsequently expanded his critique of socialism, which socialists confronted with theoretical counterattacks. Among the influential responses was that of Polish political economist Oskar Lange, who acknowledged that Mises' challenge brought attention to the issues of economic calculation and resource allocation within socialist economies. However, Lange pointed out that the equilibrium conditions in socialist economies could already be represented using a system of simultaneous equations, as demonstrated by Vilfredo Pareto and Enrico Barone.

Lange further identified three statistical prerequisites: preference scales, conditions for alternatives, and the quantity of available resources. Drawing on the ideas of Fred M. Taylor, he outlined a trial-and-error procedure and technical solutions for resolving issues in planned economies and deriving equilibrium accounting prices, attempting to establish market mechanisms within socialist economies. Thus, Lange highlighted Mises' error in narrowly defining the concept of price as merely an exchange ratio, thereby negating Mises' blanket rejection of socialism.[8]

Mises' intellectual heir, Friedrich Hayek, continued to cast doubt on the feasibility of the socialist planned economy, establishing the "second line of defense" for the Austrian School of Economics.[9] On the one hand, Hayek glorified the so-called "true individualism" embodied by the entrepreneur, recognizing only the individual or cooperative plans of participants grounded in dispersed knowledge within competitive markets while rejecting all forms of central and monopolistic planning. On the other hand, he absolutized the limitations of human knowledge in social sciences, arguing that rationality

---

7. Ludwig von Mises, *Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth*, trans. S. Adler (Auburn: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2012), 19-23.

8. Oskar Lange and Fred M. Taylor, ed. Benjamin E. Lippincott, *On the Economic Theory of Socialism* (New York City: McGraw-Hill book Company, 1964), 57-98.

9. F.A. Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 148-208.

cannot access all dynamic data, making it impossible to solve complex simultaneous equations or predict consumer preferences. Consequently, he thoroughly denied the feasibility of people understanding economic laws and systematically promoting the balanced development of social production and social justice through science and technology.

B. Integration: The Complementary Roles of Planning and Market Experience

During the Second World War, the Soviet Union once again showcased the powerful mobilization and organizational capabilities of socialism, particularly highlighting the significant advantages of the planned economy in concentrating resources to develop strategic heavy industries. In contrast, the Great Depression of the 1930s in Western countries and the military defeats at the onset of the war exposed the failures of laissez-faire market economies, signifying the theoretical bankruptcy of the Austrian School of Economics.

In the post-war capitalist bloc, pragmatic political elites embraced Keynesianism, shaping the "golden age" of capitalism.[10] Borrowing the "visible hand" of economic planning to intervene in the "invisible hand" of the monetary market, the U.S. extended an olive branch known as the Marshall Plan, while France established a centralized planning system and nationalized key economic sectors, and the United Kingdom actively explored economic planning models compatible with the free market. Practice has shown that within the framework of planned national income and social accounting, implementing expansionary government investment programs can ensure sustained high-level economic growth. This foundation enables the promotion of distributive justice and public welfare, particularly full employment, which helps reconcile class contradictions. Therefore, some argue that under capitalist conditions, moderate central planning can be combined with the free market.[11]

Conversely, socialist countries began implementing market-oriented economic reforms in the post-Stalin era, attempting to use the law of value to regulate

10. Philip Armstrong, Andrew Glyn, et al., *Capitalism since 1945* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 117-150.

11. Wallace Peterson, "Planning and the Market Economy", *Journal of Economic Issues* 3(1) (1969): 126-143.

fundamental production relations and the supply and demand of consumer goods. Yugoslavia developed a form of market socialism, Hungary experimented with a socialist market economy, and the Soviet Union introduced market management models and monetary pricing tools on a limited scale. These reforms inspired other countries within the socialist bloc to independently explore various possibilities for socialism. At the time, some argued that orthodox socialist economists often overestimated the feasibility of central planning, asserting that, in reality, a planned reproduction process could only be achieved through a market mechanism that unified commodities and money. Proponents of this view advocated for integrating the law of value into the socialist theoretical framework to achieve an organic combination of market prices and planned prices.[12]

However, from the perspective of the Austrian School of Economics, Mises and Hayek have never been effectively refuted in theory nor in practice. As the disconnect between government investment and market demand continued to worsen in Western countries, inflation and economic stagnation became increasingly severe, paving the way for the supply-side reforms initiated by Reagan and Thatcher. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union was rapidly advancing along the path of marketization towards its disintegration, particularly through the deconstruction of central planning mechanisms, which gave rise to the free-market liberalism of entrepreneurs. The fall of the Berlin Wall marked the historical end of planned economies and socialism, giving way to the comprehensive victory of neoliberalism that swept across the globe.

C. Technology and Ecology: Key Issues in Social Planning

The events of 2008 represented not only an unprecedented crisis of the market economy but also a profound civilizational and ecological crisis, compellingly reaffirming the validity of Marx's political and economic theories. Public consciousness shifted from a singular focus on economic growth to an emphasis on social and ecological justice, rendering the development of socialist planning both more feasible and necessary than ever before.

---

12. I. Konnik, "Plan and Market in the Socialist Economy," *Problems in Economics* 9(8) (1966): 24-35. doi:10.2753/PET1061-1991090824.

Left-wing intellectuals have revisited the ideals of communism, with Alain Badiou perceiving it as a hypothetical proposition in the process of actualization.[13] For the "engineers" in Neurath's sense, this actualization represents a social plan that can be achieved through revolution in computer technology. Lange had previously predicted that a computer-based economic accounting servo system could effectively simulate the natural processes of market feedback and iteration while also avoiding delays and fluctuations. This capability would facilitate the dynamic analysis of projected future prices and market equilibrium prices, soundly enabling the formulation of long-term socialist economic plans.[14] Paul Cockshott and his co-researchers systematically developed mathematical models of planned and market economies, aiming to demonstrate that the speed of economic accounting in distributed computing significantly surpasses that of the capitalist free market, thereby establishing the concept of a "digital political economy."[15] This theoretical framework is adapted to the statistical and informational conditions of the digital age, examining specific issues such as knowledge encoding, labor value, and social relations, affirming the feasibility and superiority of socialist planned economies.

Ecological socialists draw on Marx's concepts of use value and technological progress, advocating for reduced labor hours to achieve total freedom. They attribute the sixth mass extinction to neoliberal globalization, underscoring the political and economic importance of planned regulation in the relationship between humanity and nature. John O'Neill revisited Neurath's ideas of "physical calculation" while opposing the technocratic approach to deliberative democracy, offering an ecological critique of Hayek's monetary price system.[16] Following this logic, Michael Löwy, Troy Vettese, and others explore alternatives to capitalism's "destructive progress," consistently grounding their arguments in distributed information technologies and degrowth-oriented social planning. The independent socialist journal *Monthly Review* continues to focus on contemporary ecological justice issues, with John Bellamy Foster systematically critiquing the myth of market self-regulation in a series of

13. Alain Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, trans. David Macey and Steve Corcoran (London and New York: Verso), 235-260.

14. Lange and Taylor, *On the Economic Theory of Socialism*, 401-405.

15. W. Paul Cockshott, Allin F. Cottrell, et al., *Classical Econophysics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 321-340.

16. John O' Neill, *Markets, Deliberation and Environment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 185-195.

articles and studies. He emphasizes that only a radically large-scale, organized socialist plan can fundamentally alter the course of the “global massacre” perpetrated by capitalism.[17]

In summary, neoliberalism is essentially an irrational system within capitalism – a form of economic mysticism that elevates money to the status of a deity, regards the market as a promised land, and seeks salvation through profit. The gospel of the free market it propagates merely serves to place global capital under the control of a select few elites on Wall Street, while compelling citizens and politicians worldwide to submit to a form of “fetishism.” This dynamic has prompted even Francis Fukuyama to express a somewhat ambiguous yearning for Marx and left-wing ideals.[18]

2. Digital Planning or Digital Market?

As Wall Street’s investment banks have fallen from grace amid the global economic crisis, tech giants in Silicon Valley have begun to strategically lead the regeneration process of capitalist market economies by leveraging their control over information technology and data resources. In other words, the economic regulatory mechanism is undergoing a transformation, with a data-driven value feedback system replacing the natural price formation system mediated by money. However, from the perspective of Marx's critique of political economy, as left-wing scholar Evgeny Morozov asserts, the necessary precondition for the digitization of capitalism remains commodity production, with capital accumulation as a key stage of this process. Therefore, even though digital technology eliminates the material form of money, it is merely an inevitable intermediary in the process of capital accumulation, never “playing the first fiddle.”[19]

---

17. John Bellamy Foster and Batuhan Sarican, “ ‘Monthly Review’ and the Environment,” *Monthly Review* 75 (November 1, 2023): https://monthlyreview.org/2023/11/01/monthly-review-and-the-environment/.

18. Francis Fukuyama, “The Future of History: Can Liberal Democracy Survive the Decline of the Middle Class?,” *Foreign Affairs* (January 1, 2012): https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2012-01-01/future-history.

19. Evgeny Morozov, “Digital Socialism?,” *New Left Review* 116/117 (2019).

A. Tech Giants: Digital Accumulation and Monopoly

The giant multinational tech companies represented by Apple, Alphabet, Amazon, Meta, and Microsoft are collectively referred to as "Big Tech," signifying their status as true monopolistic entities of the digital age in the global market. These companies are an inevitable product of advancements in computer and internet technologies. They acquire startup tech companies at exorbitant premiums and continually expand the realm of digital accumulation, which las led to the large-scale concentration and monopolization of digital capital.

Whether viewed as capitalists in the Marxian sense or entrepreneurs from Hayek's perspective, the economic activities of these entities are consciously planned actions, reliant on information and knowledge derived from market dynamics. As Schumpeter noted with his concept of "creative destruction," Alphabet's Google+ created digital colonies by acquiring nascent digital firms and providing users with free services. This approach bypassed moral, legal, ethical, and privacy boundaries, enabling the plundering and monopolization of digital resources, including the digitization of human ideas and knowledge, thus spearheading the primitive accumulation of digital capital.[20]

Meta's Facebook platform successfully emulated the Google+ initiative, exerting profound influence on people's daily lives and social interactions while systematically extracting and collecting personal data, encouraging users to generate and submit surplus data. Similarly, Apple's ecosystems, Microsoft's desktop operating systems, and Amazon's expanding online marketing systems integrate digital accumulation as a core element. This approach ensures the planned development, production, and sale of digital products, continually increasing the certainty of securing supernormal profits. Notably, digital terminals, software, algorithms, and related technologies have become the foundational infrastructure that determines the operation of the financial sector and even the broader economy. As a result, traditional financial institutions have been forced to initiate digital transformation strategies, with Citigroup and JPMorgan making substantial investments in digital finance.

The leaders of digital monopolies, often "engineers" functioning as entrepreneurs, continue Neurath's grand plan of organizing information and

20. Shohana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (New York City: Public Affairs, 2019).

control over the world, thereby possessing both economic and political attributes. The social necessity of commodity production determines the natural inevitability of digital monopolies. Only by digitizing and privatizing market information can vast amounts of data be concentrated, allowing for the planned control of the monetary price system, the labor production process, and the entire market economy's dynamics. This control extends to influencing public policy and shaping social discourse.

If monopolies in the pre-digital era were defined by the dominance of capital circulation (M-C-M') over simple commodity circulation (C-M-C), monopolies in the digital age are characterized by control over capital circulation itself. This control is exercised through a process of digital planning aimed at expropriating surplus value, with profit growth and capital accumulation as the ultimate goals of this process.[21]

Since users are not customers, and there is neither an employment relationship nor a direct market transaction between platforms and users, the process of digital primitive accumulation is practically without compensation. However, the value of digital capital is appropriated by tech companies, reflecting the characteristics of primitive capital accumulation that Marx pointed out. From a historical perspective, big tech companies are not only replacing traditional financial monopolies by directly regulating the dynamic processes of the global market; as supernational entities, they are also transforming humanity's unconscious natural desires into purposeful digital capital.

B. Big Data Platforms: Digital Feedback and Forecasting

Advancements in information technology are accelerating the digitalization process. As direct products of digital accumulation and monopolization, big data platforms are increasingly demonstrating their crucial role in corporate planning. Data centers composed of supercomputers, high-speed storage systems, and artificial intelligence, interconnected with personal devices, can concurrently collect and analyze market information. This enables automated, efficient, and precise digital feedback and forecasting. Lange's equations have

21. Paško Bilié, Toni Prug, et al., *The Political Economy of Digital Monopolies: Contradictions and Alternatives to Data Commodification* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2021), 169.

evolved into digital algorithm models, while Neurath's concept of physical calculation is grounded in the Internet of Things. Big data platforms facilitate the balancing of consumer preferences and commodity production, with the "central planning department" emerging as the decision-making core for various large tech companies.

In the digital age, data is regarded as the new oil, indicating a shift in monetary mechanisms. According to the orthodox views of the Austrian School of Economics, the monetary price system functions as the optimal market mechanism for regulating demand and allocating resources. It relies on the free flow of knowledge (information and data) in commodity exchange, which generates commodity prices that fluctuate around product value. However, this price feedback mechanism, mediated by money, is inherently passive, lagging, and limited, rendering it ineffective in supporting rational predictions of market preferences and demand.

Recently, Austrian scholar-entrepreneur Viktor Schönberger and others have pointed out that when data-rich markets disrupt traditional money-based systems, humanity can overcome information scarcity and cognitive dilemmas. By leveraging digital feedback and forecasting, it becomes possible to mitigate price fluctuations, rectify competitive order, and promote rational planning aligned with social justice and sustainable development. This shift facilitates the transition of the socio-economy from financial capitalism to digital capitalism.[22]

According to classical Marxist theory, capitalist market economies operate on the foundation of private ownership of the means of production and fundamentally revolve around the processes of producing, expropriating, and distributing surplus value. This leads to the alienation and commodification of human production relations and social interactions. Within the framework of private ownership, large tech companies fundamentally reject the socialization of digital resources. Consequently, the feedback and forecasting mechanisms of their big data platforms inevitably exacerbate alienation and commodification, accelerating capital concentration, labor surplus, and polarization. Morozov explores this in detail, highlighting that data is essential raw material for the production processes of digital capitalism. The foundation of new social relations lies in the power structures of data "extraction," where data is

22. Viktor Mayer-Schönberger and Thomas Ramge, *Reinventing Capitalism in the Age of Big Data* (New York: Basic Books, 2018).

transformed into digital products that generate surplus profits through specific algorithms. User behavior data and privacy information become the price users pay for "free services," a dynamic that is touted as the symbiotic mechanism of digital capitalism.[23]

Google in particular serves as a prime example of leveraging big data platforms for digital feedback and forecasting. Especially after acquiring Android, millions of servers are connected to devices throughout the world, positioning Google as a full-stack artificial intelligence company. Google's engineers pioneered the development of the AdSense advertising algorithm model, where user behaviors such as clicks, searches, and interests altered the pricing mechanism for online advertisements, making the further "extraction" of user data inevitable. The digital feedback and forecasting algorithms of shared platforms like Google and Facebook aim to achieve personalized marketing, while the big data platforms of companies like Apple, Amazon, and Microsoft ultimately focus on the development and sale of personalized physical and digital products.

C. The Metaverse Model: Digital Production and Expansion

The metaverse is a term originating from cyberpunk literature, which Mark Zuckerberg used to describe the future digital realm. This concept led to Facebook's rebranding as "Meta," marking a new phase in the ongoing development of the digital landscape. The metaverse model has given rise to various digital frameworks, including virtual reality, augmented reality, mixed reality, and extended reality, guiding the development of a twin structure that enables comprehensive interaction between the material world and the realm of abstract ideas. Engineers at big tech companies are formulating comprehensive plans for digital production and expansion to realize this vision.

The digital twin concept originated from the U.S. Air Force's computer simulations and modeling of real-world scenarios and is regarded as a crucial foundation of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.[24] Engineers leverage the

23. Evgeny Morozov, *Big Tech: a ascensão dos dados e a morte da política* (Sao Paulo: Ubu Editora, 2018), 1, 120, 145, 161-179.

24. *Digital Twin Driven Intelligent Systems and Emerging Metaverse*, eds. Enis Karaarslan, Ömer Aydin, et al. (Singapore: Springer, 2023).

interactive capabilities of big data platforms for feedback and forecasting to create three-dimensional digital models of the physical processes involved in commodity production and reproduction. This approach seeks to enhance planned management across various stages, including demand analysis, product development, manufacturing, logistics tracking, and after-sales service. As a result, it drives the transformation of traditional manufacturing into digital intelligent manufacturing, thereby developing a form of digital Taylorism.[25] Digital factories are no longer confined to specific, enclosed spaces; rigorous labor monitoring now extends to all possible external environments, such as the "last mile" for delivery workers. Consequently, traditional workers are being replaced by smart robots, while highly fragmented labor is organized through platform algorithms and outsourced based on piece-rate standards that align with capitalist production methods, often to global gig workers who earn lower average wages. It is evident that digital capitalism promotes the automation, socialization, and globalization of production; however, it does not—and cannot—resolve the inherent contradictions of private ownership. Instead, it subtly and directly reproduces exploitative mechanisms that increase labor intensity and extend working hours.

Capitalist production is inherently expansive, with the extraction, plundering, and monopolization of digital resources being intrinsic requirements of big tech companies' metaverse plans. This approach contradicts the principles of entrepreneurial spirit and free markets, even from the perspective of the Austrian School of Economics. If every rational worker is also an entrepreneur, his actions in the market must stem from the knowledge and information he possesses. However, the foundation of capitalist digital production lies in the alienation of workers from their behavioral data, which is objectified as digital capital owned by specific others and transformed into a form of digital power. Under the discipline of this power, real individuals become digital entities, social relations transform into digital relationships, and natural ecologies are replaced by digital ecologies. Individuals themselves resemble unconscious, organ-less machines, as predicted by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, completely immersed in a digitally driven space of desire production, while digital monopolies hinder the free flow of data.[26]

---

25. Maritz Altenried, *The Digital Factory: the Human Labor of Automation* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 159-171.

26. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 116-121, 301-382.

With the expansion of the metaverse, particularly through breakthroughs in brain-machine interface technology, the collection of human behavioral data will increase exponentially. The intermediary status of traditional currency and its price production mechanism will gradually decline, while digital algorithms may play a decisive role in commodity production and reproduction processes. This, in turn, will profoundly impact political democracy and ideology, potentially giving rise to digital imperialism and digital colonialism.

3. The Digital Socialist Model

The digitalization of human society, dominated by big tech companies, has essentially innovated the technical foundation and algorithmic models of economic accounting, objectively validating and expanding the planned economy proposals put forth by socialist engineers. In the late 1980s, computer scientist Paul Cockshott and political economist Allin Cottrell collaborated on the book *Towards a New Socialism*, revisiting Marx's labor theory of value and re-examining the structural transformations that drive the transition from capitalism to communism through digital technology. They systematically explored the theories and practices of digital socialism, which has been regarded by the Austrian School of Economics as its only worthy opponent in debate.[27] In recent years, they have published works such as *Economic Planning in an Age of Climate Crisis*,[28] addressing the theoretical propositions and real concerns of "eco-socialism" from the perspective of digital political economy, thereby refining the theoretical model of digital socialism.

A. Digital Labor: A Measure of Value for Social Justice

Cockshott and Cottrell conceive of socialism as the initial phase of communism in the Marxian framework, stressing that rational economic calculation should

27. W. Paul Cockshott and Allin Cottrell, *Towards a New Socialism* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1993).

28. W. Paul Cockshott, A. Cottrell, et al., *Economic Planning in an Age of Climate Crisis* (2022).

be based on labor time. They contend that making labor the sole legitimate source of income, along with ensuring that workers receive the entirety of their income, are fundamental prerequisites for social justice. Thus, under fully socialist conditions, the figures in workers' personal accounts reflect labor hours rather than monetary wages. These hours do not possess the same functions of currency, as they cannot be circulated, transferred, or saved, and can only be exchanged for consumable goods of an equivalent amount labor time within a specified validity period; utilizing them leads to their expenditure. By leveraging digital infrastructure, the entire process of recording, exchanging, and canceling labor hours can be automated through public big data service platforms, significantly reducing the interference and disruption typically caused by subjective biases and bureaucratic hurdles.

Of course, individual differences among workers determine the heterogeneity of labor, something Marx historically analyzed. Building on Marx's ideas, Cockshott and Cottrell developed a multiplier algorithm that accounts for the distinction between simple, skilled, and advanced labor. Using computers, they propose real-time estimation of the maximum total labor time, which then allows for calculating the rate of conversion between heterogeneous forms of labor into value, represented by the transmission rate *Rf*. Skilled and advanced labor can thus be multiplied by $1+Rf$, enabling dynamic and planned adjustments to the social production process.

If all labor forces are rated, with "B-level" workers' labor hours as the baseline, then "A-level" workers would be credited with more labor time, while "C-level" workers would be credited with less. The value of labor products would similarly consist of the indirect and direct labor hours embedded in them, ensuring the balance of total social wealth value. Theoretically, unemployment would not exist: "C-level" workers might have less demanding jobs and lighter consumption needs, but their social status would remain unaffected. Given the need for public services, both labor hours and labor products would be extracted by the government at a set proportion to support social welfare programs such as education, healthcare, pensions, and aid for disadvantaged members of society. At the macro level, the distribution of labor products would be a direct act of social planning, bypassing the need for commodification as an intermediary or the generation of monetary prices through market exchanges.

In the view of Cockshott, Cottrell, and others, once labor time truly becomes the measure of social wealth, production costs and use value can be directly

balanced through digital computation. This would dismantle the economic foundations of class oppression and exploitation, freeing future social planning from the dominance of monetary logic and commodity fetishism.[29] The essence of digital capitalism lies in the fact that products continue to exist as commodities, and the monetary prices that signify their exchange value are merely tools for entrepreneurs to manipulate supply and demand. Market demand is only expressed as the ability and willingness to consume, driven by desires, while the distribution of social wealth is shaped by fragmented advertising. Therefore, the development of private digital technologies favors labor exploitation, with mass unemployment and atomized workers becoming both inevitable outcomes and necessary conditions. In contrast, a key feature of digital socialism is that digital platforms used to calculate labor value operate independently of the market. These platforms directly provide feedback and predictive models for ”engineers,” and the speed of data collection, updating, and iteration far surpasses traditional market mechanisms, ensuring that social production is organized in a planned manner, closely aligned with actual social needs.

B. Digital Carbon Rights: The Opportunity Cost of Ecological Civilization

Marx pointed out long ago that capitalist mass production inevitably leads to a “rupture” between society and nature.[30] The capital expansion since the Industrial Revolution has also demonstrated that profit-driven free markets tend to destructively conquer nature, and this logic of alienation can never resolve the issues of sustainable development. Digital forecasts of global climate indicate that if humanity fails to effectively control carbon emissions in the 21st century, the Earth's ecological environment will inevitably deteriorate sharply over the process of capitalism's acceleration. Human civilization will face irreversible natural crises, including resource depletion, glacier melting, rising sea levels, flooding, frequent fires, and widespread famine. An increasing number of ecologists are rediscovering socialism, advocating for a rational

29. Paul Cockshott, *How the World Works: The Story of Human Labor from Prehistory to the Modern Day* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2020), 203-324.

30. John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 155-177.

spirit embedded in ecological justice, prioritizing social planning over market rules, monetary logic, and advertising culture.[31]

Within the framework of a digital socialist planned economy, Cockshott and his fellow researchers have defined carbon emission rights as an opportunity cost of social production, with government investment steering industrial structural adjustments towards an ecological civilization characterized by the harmonious coexistence of humanity and nature. In the late 1940s, Soviet mathematician Leonid Kantorovich pioneered optimal planning theory by transforming the challenge of scientifically utilizing productive resources into a system of mathematical equations.[32] He successfully developed a simple yet effective algorithm for solving these equations, demonstrating not only the feasibility of alternatives to the monetary system and profit motive but also the ability to account for the limitations of natural resources and the environment, thereby enabling rational choices between different technologies. Meanwhile, Russian-American economist Wassily Leontief digitally processed national statistical data to create the input-output matrix algorithm, providing a concise conceptual model for overall economic planning. Based on the Kantorovich-Leontief algorithm, Cockshott's team developed software systems for simulating digital planning, integrating carbon neutrality goals into equation matrices and assigning value to scarce resources and carbon emission rights. This framework was expanded an AI "harmony function," facilitating vector adjustments of final demand and potentially transforming consumption expectations by replacing advertising inducements with actual demand.

They assert that labor value inherently encompasses the labor time necessary for producing machinery, intermediate products, and for extracting resources. However, it is also crucial to account for the scarcity value of resources that cannot be produced by labor, particularly the constraints imposed by greenhouse gas emissions. These factors should be reflected in the product value as opportunity costs associated with ecological civilization. In other words, while ensuring the successful achievement of planned objectives, a dynamic scale should be established to measure lost opportunities. When a unit of labor devoted to consumer goods is sacrificed, the corresponding land, labor, and machinery must then be allocated to the production of non-consumer

31. Michael Löwy, *Ecosocialism: A Radical Alternative to Capitalist Catastrophe* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 1-18.

32. L.V. Kantorovich, "Mathematical Methods of Organizing and Planning Production," *Management Science* 6(4) (1960).

goods, thereby increasing the value of the optimization objective function, such as developing new energy sources or restoring natural environments. The same algorithm can also be applied to optimize the production of low-carbon substitute products. For instance, if producing a unit of a traditional product requires three units of labor and results in high carbon emissions, while producing a unit of an environmentally friendly product requires four units of labor but emits little to no carbon, the optimization plan can assess the opportunity costs of inputs. This approach maximizes the production of environmentally friendly products and promotes carbon neutrality. By leveraging big data platforms, it is possible to aggregate opportunity costs and optimize production plans for thousands of products within the real economy. This can simulate market mechanisms to guide consumers toward choosing substitute products, ensuring that high-carbon products are only produced if consumers are willing to pay a premium for them.

C. Digital Democracy: The Decision-Making Mechanism of Social Planning

When Marx authored *Capital*, he anticipated the emergence of automated and intelligent machine systems, noting that when such systems exist as fixed capital, they inevitably become forces of objectified knowledge that leave the laboring masses behind. In contrast, the purpose of socialism in developing productive forces is not merely to amass vast quantities of commodities but to save labor time and liberate individuals. This means allowing workers more free time to engage in social management, scientific research, and cultural activities, thereby achieving their self-actualization. In this sense, the intelligent manufacturing systems built on digital technology are greatly liberating workers while rapidly creating a decentralized and non-representative democratic mechanism. This “unorganized organization” facilitates the direct participation of the laboring masses in the democratic decision-making of social planning, showcasing socialism's greater rational potential that transcends capitalism.[33]

---

33. Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* (London: Penguin Books, 2008); Sebastian Berg and Jeanette Hofmann, “Concepts of the Digital Society: Digital Democracy,” *Internet Policy Review* 10(4) (2021).

Just as big tech companies utilize big data platforms to monitor the daily production and living environments of the laboring masses through their personal devices, social organizations can similarly establish public digital platforms to manage the processes of social production and interaction using appropriate algorithms. Cockshott and his colleagues have envisioned a democratic decision-making mechanism whereby various functional social organizations, leveraging the digital feedback and predictive algorithms of public platforms, can propose multiple potential and feasible objective plans, such as improving transportation, expanding industry, managing the environment, and ensuring housing. Each plan's labor time and opportunity costs are made publicly transparent and accessible for inquiry. When necessary, public debates led by engineers can further enhance the rational understanding of the laboring masses, culminating in decisions made through secure, anonymous, and verifiable voting.

Under this system, the laboring masses are the ultimate representatives of social power. They can conveniently determine labor taxation and social planning through digital terminals, submit personalized orders for consumer goods, or delegate the management of public assets and projects to specific committees. This structure is essential to preventing engineers from becoming a new bureaucratic elite, which could lead to a new oligarchic regime. In summary, digital technology and labor value must be unified with the laborers themselves, shifting the principles of strategic decision-making from being oriented with private profit to public interest. This planned economy, governed by digital democracy, represents a decisive step toward ultimate freedom, where increased free time is a necessary condition for the laboring people's participation in economic decision-making and social governance.

The universal consensus among digital socialists is that digital information should inherently be social; it is only under capitalism that it becomes privatized, thereby restricting its free flow and universal accessibility. Consequently, the metadata of big tech companies must be transferred to social organizations. This movement is helping social culture transcend the bourgeoisie's narrow and abstract individualism. A new culture, fueled by the explosion of information in the metaverse, will ultimately be widely embraced by the global populace, particularly the younger generations. Multilateralism, pluralism, social justice, and ecological civilization are destined to become the common orientations of a shared human destiny.

4. The Path to Digital Socialism

The theoretical framework of digital socialism has largely taken shape, but the challenge lies in actualization. Soviet engineers once foresaw a model for socialist digitalization, and later, Chilean engineers were the first to explore this path in practice. However, both efforts were ultimately thwarted by neoliberal coups, which stemmed from insufficient democratic participation by the laboring masses. Amidst the rise of neoliberalism, tech companies paved the way towards digital capitalism, a process that, while resulting in the total alienation of human society, also created the historical conditions of material technology and social consciousness necessary for a new form of digital socialism. Since the dawn of this century, with the iterative advancement of digital infrastructure and the accelerated deterioration of the global ecological environment, progressive forces throughout the world have begun actively promoting digital socialism, particularly in areas that concern the shared fate of all humanity, such as economic planning, societal democracy, and environmental protection.

A. Historical Experience: The Experiments of the Former Soviet Union and Chile

In the post-Stalin era, the Soviet Union hoped to revitalize its socialist planned economy through the automation and digitalization of industrial production. This strategic decision was far ahead of its time and foreshadowed the trends of the 21st century.[34] Advocated and promoted by scientists like Viktor Glushkov and Anatoly Kitov, the use of computer technology expanded from the military sector to the social realm. They secretly formulated a comprehensive digitalization blueprint based on systems control theory, with the construction of a centralized unified information network seen as a strategic project that could lead or even surpass the United States. However, this was a flower that bore no fruit, as various departments established independent systems that were incompatible with one another, each guarding its own digital territory. Major enterprises instinctively opposed digital regulation, and the reforms of political

34. Kees van der PIjl, "Democracy, Planning, and Big Data: A Socialism for the Twenty-First Century?," *Monthly Review* 71(11) (2020).

liberalization and economic marketization ultimately led to the failure of socialist digitalization.

Meanwhile, Kosygin enthusiastically responded to the U.S. invitation to establish the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) and worked together to address issues such as resource allocation, climate crises, and ocean pollution. This collaboration resulted in the construction of a digital global model capable of monitoring carbon emissions, which can be considered to be an early attempt at augmented reality, digital twins, and the metaverse. Engineers recognized that digitalization was not merely about the instrumental use of computers; it was especially about feedback and forecasting based on large-scale data analysis, encompassing various potential outcomes and the uncertainties that accompany them, much like weather forecasting.

In 1970, under the leadership of Salvador Allende, the Chilean Socialist Party briefly held power and implemented a comprehensive plan for socialist digitalization aimed at strengthening the management of state-owned enterprises and the social economy.[35] The project was led by British cybernetician Stafford Beer, whose team modeled the neural structures and functions of living organisms to create an advanced, large-scale, systematic digital twin model. This model mapped the recursive sequences of the entire country, various sectors, enterprises, factories, and even individual workers, while existing telecommunications equipment laid the foundation for a distributed "digital highway."

According to Beer, this represented a "liberated machine" capable of autonomously learning and self-regulating in response to changes in the external environment, thereby maintaining a dynamic balance between centralization (command) and decentralization (democracy)—a precursor to what we now refer to as artificial intelligence. Allende emphasized that ultimate control of this system must belong to the people. Beer further refined the digital model to enhance democratic participation, decision-making, and management, inspiring a sense of ownership among workers through public engagement, training, and experiential learning. With this system, the Chilean government could not only monitor the dynamics of social production and economic operations in real time but also predict future trends and optimize decision-making. Outputs were driven by information data rather than

35. Katharina Loeber, "Big Data, Algorithmic Regulation, and the History of the Cybersyn Project in Chile, 1971-1973," *Social Sciences* 7(4 (2018).

hierarchical authority, significantly alleviating the cumbersome forms of bureaucracy.

Both of these experiments ultimately ended due to coups orchestrated by the domestic bourgeoisie in collusion with foreign neoliberal forces, primarily because the political consciousness and democratic participation of the laboring masses were insufficient. Moreover, in terms of digital technology itself, the material infrastructure was not yet adequate to facilitate a comprehensive transformation of productive forces and production relations.

B. The Imperative of the Times: Platform Cooperation and Data Sharing

At the 2009 Davos Forum, neoliberals proposed a "Digital New Deal" that relied on corporations rather than governments. This plan aimed to privatize and liberalize individuals' production data to advance the digitalization of the market economy and monetary system. Left-wing scholars responded by asking, "If capitalism can have a digital plan, why can't socialism?"[36]

Contemporary digital political economist James Muldoon has reexamined Otto Neurath's socialist planned economy model and critiqued the shortcomings of top-down reform efforts that lack democratic backing. Muldoon proposes a 21st-century digital socialist alternative that is both relevant and feasible, embodying the fundamental principles of social justice and ecological sustainability. He argues that the main task is to build a pluralistic digital democratic mechanism and cooperative platforms.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have already pointed out that all democratic mechanisms to date have ultimately resulted in oligarchic rule by a few individuals, fundamentally undermining and negating the ideals of democracy. However, digital technology creates the possibility for genuine democracy.[37] Big tech companies are already advocating for the digitalization of community life, and digital platforms, which began as virtual spaces for everyday

---

36. Morozov, "Digital Socialism?"

37. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 328-348.

communication, have evolved into virtual factories for cooperative production and political stages for democratic participation. The underlying logic of these platforms, however, is geared toward digital capital accumulation, online advertising expansion, and platform oligarchy.

In response, James Muldoon suggests that unionizing within large tech companies could strengthen democratic control over digital platforms, production processes, and corporate strategy.[38] Meanwhile, independent workers could establish cooperatives or social enterprises to jointly own and manage digital assets, creating value centered around universal needs and interests, gradually dismantling the power structures and barriers of digital capitalism. Additionally, the social ownership of digital platforms should be integrated with new democratic governance structures, fostering deliberative democracy among stakeholders such as producers, consumers, and public communities. This must be a bottom-up people's democratic movement.

The digital plans driven by this democratic mechanism should aim to serve members and the public, rather than pursue profit and generate advertisements. Thus, it is necessary to explore distributed models of social governance based on digital platforms, cultivate a participatory political culture, and raise citizens' democratic consciousness.

Muldoon emphasizes that, in addition to fostering mutual cooperation, digital socialism must also strive to address major systemic challenges related to resource allocation and product distribution. The key is to reshape the entire economic order based on comprehensive socialization, a continuation of Neurath's thinking. Eco-socialists have already pointed out that the only way to effectively tackle ecological crises such as climate change and environmental pollution is through worker-led social cooperation and democratic planning.[39] Morozov particularly highlights the feedback function of digital infrastructure, which can enable economic regulation through non-market mechanisms, proving more efficient than market discovery processes. Muldoon also adopts Hayek's reasonable suggestion, advocating for the use of existing social funds to guide private capital investment, forming a democratically-controlled mixed economy. This approach relies on digital algorithms to correct the blindness,

---

38. James Muldoon, *Platform Socialism: How to Reclaim Our Digital Future from Big Tech* (London: Pluto Press, 2022).

39. M. Graziano Ceddia and Jacopo Nicola Bergamo, "The Necessity of System Change: An Ecological and Marxian Synthesis," *Monthly Review* 75(11) (2024).

inequality, and instability inherent in free markets. In today's digital era, platforms offer unprecedented opportunities to achieve equitable resource allocation through democratic means.

C. Choosing a Path: Strategies and Tactics

Big tech companies have established digital platforms that transcend national borders, and the iterative development of data technology increasingly reinforces their commodification logic and exploitation methods. Plans for expanding the metaverse are accelerating their total penetration and surveillance of social production and interactions, posing serious threats to privacy, freedom, democracy, and sustainable development. Neoliberal digital policies advocate breaking digital monopolies to regulate the digital market; however, their emphasis on personal data ownership and fair exchange inevitably exacerbates the atomization and polarization of laborers, leading to class conflict, public mobilization, and radical actions. Digital socialism adopts a historically materialist and progressive stance, actively working to rebuild the collective organizations and power structures of laborers from the ground up. These organizations would formulate digital plans based on universal principles of social justice and ecological protection, gradually dismantling the private ownership of digital capitalism and achieving public or collective ownership of data, thereby guiding society toward the communist ideals outlined by Marx.

Cockshott and Cottrell reflect on the historical experiences of socialist revolutions in the last century and outline three strategic steps for the transition to a new form of socialism and its digitalization. The ultimate goal is to replace the market driven by capital profit with a socially planned economy supported by digital technology.[40] The first step involves guiding the transformation of private capitalism into state or collective capitalism through a peaceful buy-out process. This orderly transition of ownership typically does not disrupt the actual production process; rather, it can activate workers' sense of agency and innovative spirit. The second step is to improve economic planning and its democratic decision-making mechanisms while constructing a compatible digital platform. As the platform matures, indicative planning will be upgraded

40. W. Paul Cockshott and Allin Cottrell, *Towards a New Socialism: New Preface, 3rd Draft* (2004).

to directive planning. The third step is abolishing the monetary price system and fully transition to a labor value system. This involves transforming the remaining rentiers into workers and using political means to eliminate financial debt relations. Through an equitable system of labor time calculation, the welfare level of the majority can be significantly improved. They emphasize that during this entire transitional period, the monetary price market will still play a role to some extent, but it must be constrained by socialist macro-planning, and it is essential to firmly defend direct democracy's control over digital platforms.

Muldoon further proposes three specific strategies for resisting, regulating, and re-encoding the digital future. The first two are methods of struggle suited to current conditions, while the latter represents a long-term strategy. The first strategy involves grassroots resistance against the monopolistic power of tech companies, driven by collective action from internal workers and external users. The second strategy leverages state power and multinational organizational mechanisms to incorporate digital democracy and reform proposals into the agendas of pro-worker parties, thereby regulating the excesses of tech companies and monitoring their influence.

He also emphasizes that a crucial component of this transitional strategy is the construction of digital platforms under direct democratic control. Without control over digital infrastructure, it is impossible to implement a plan for digital democracy and embed it within alternative coding systems; thus, mere macro-regulation of existing private tech platforms is insufficient. He points out that the prerequisite for digitization is the development of direct democracy, and that egalitarianism can challenge the hegemonic status of capitalism, gradually evolving economic democracy into political democracy. However, for a certain period, capitalist elements will persist within the new mixed model, making it essential to remain vigilant against the surveillance of alternative proposals by digital capital and to resist opposition, sabotage, or even subversion from the bourgeoisie and their intellectual elites.

RED AMERICA

is a publication of the American Communist Party.

Issue #001
November 2024

Subscription information

redamerica.acp.us